## CHAPTER II.

**What then? No criticising? No.—No blame? No.—You explain everything? Yes.—Genius is an entity like Nature, and requires, like Nature, to be accepted purely and simply. A mountain must be accepted as such or left alone. There are men who would make a criticism on the Himalayas, pebble by pebble. Mount Etna blazes and slavers, throws out its glare, its wrath, its lava, and its ashes; these men take scales and weigh those ashes, pinch by pinch. *Quot libras in monte summo?* Meanwhile genius continues its eruption. Everything in it has its reason for existing. It is because it is. Its shadow is the inverse of its light. Its smoke comes from its flame. Its depth is the result of its height. We love this more and that less; but we remain silent wherever we feel God. We are in the forest; the tortuosity of the tree is its secret. The sap knows what it is doing. The root knows its own business. We take things as they are; we are indulgent for that which is excellent, tender, or magnificent; we acquiesce in *chefs-d'œuvre*; we do not make use of one to find fault with the other; we do not insist upon Phidias sculpturing cathedrals, or upon Pinaigrier glazing temples (the temple is the harmony, the cathedral is the mystery; they are two different forms of the sublime); we do not claim for the Münster the perfection of the Parthenon, or for the Parthenon the grandeur of the Münster. We are so far whimsical as to be satisfied with both being beautiful. We do not reproach for its sting the insect that gives us honey. We renounce our right to criticise the feet of the peacock, the cry of the swan, the plumage of the nightingale, the butterfly for having been caterpillar, the thorn of the rose, the smell of the lion, the skin of the elephant, the prattle of the cascade, the pips of the orange, the immobility of the Milky Way, the saltness of the ocean, the spots on the sun, the nakedness of Noah.**

**The *quandoque bonus dormitat* is permitted to Horace. We raise no objection. What is certain is, that Homer would not say it of Horace,—he would not take the trouble. Himself the eagle, Homer would indeed find Horace, the chattering humming-bird, charming. I grant it is pleasant to a man to feel himself superior, and say, "Homer is puerile; Dante is childish." It is indulging in a pretty smile. To crush these poor geniuses a little, why not? To be the Abbé Trublet, and say, "Milton is a schoolboy," it is pleasing. How witty is the man who finds that Shakespeare has no wit! That man is La Harpe, Delandine, Auger; he is, was, or shall be, an Academician. "All these great men are made up of extravagance, bad taste, and childishness." What a fine decree to issue! These fashions tickle voluptuously those who have them; and in reality, when they have said, "This**

**giant is small," they can fancy that they are great. Every man has his own way. As for myself, the writer of these lines, I admire everything like a fool.**

**That is why I have written this book.**

**To admire, to be an enthusiast,—it has struck me that it was right to give in our century this example of folly.**

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## CHAPTER III.

**Do not look, then, for any criticism. I admire Æschylus, I admire Juvenal, I admire Dante, in the mass, in a lump, all. I do not cavil at those great benefactors. What you characterize as a fault, I call accent. I accept and give thanks. I do not inherit the marvels of human wit conditionally. Pegasus being given to me, I do not look the gift-horse in the mouth. A masterpiece offers its hospitality: I approach it with my hat off, and think the visage of mine host handsome. Gilles Shakespeare, it may be: I admire Shakespeare and I admire Gilles. Falstaff is proposed to me: I accept him, and I admire the "Empty the jorden." I admire the senseless cry, "A rat!" I admire the jests of Hamlet; I admire the wholesale murders of Macbeth; I admire the witches, "that ridiculous spectacle;" I admire "the buttock of the night;" I admire the eye plucked from Gloster. I am simple enough to admire all.**

**Having recently had the honour to be called "silly" by several distinguished writers and critics, and even by my illustrious friend M. de Lamartine,[1] I am determined to justify the epithet.**

**We close with one last observation which we have specially to make regarding Shakespeare.**

**Orestes, that fatal senior of Hamlet, is not, as we have said, the sole link between Æschylus and Shakespeare; we have noted a relation, less easily perceptible, between Prometheus and Hamlet. The mysterious close connection between the two poets is, in reference to this same Prometheus, more strangely striking yet, and in a particular which, up to this time, has escaped the observers and critics. Prometheus is the grandsire of Mab.**

**Let us prove it.**

**Prometheus, like all personages become legendary,—like Solomon, like Cæsar, like Mahomet, like Charlemagne, like the Cid, like Joan of Arc, like Napoleon,—**

**has a double prolongation, the one in history, the other in fable. Now, the prolongation of Prometheus is this:**

**Prometheus, creator of men, is also creator of spirits. He is father of a dynasty of Divs, whose filiation the old metrical tales have preserved: Elf, that is to say, the Rapid, son of Prometheus; then Elfin, King of India; then Elfinan, founder of Cleopolis, town of the fairies; then Elfilin, builder of the golden wall; then Elfinell, winner of the battle of the demons; then Elfant, who made Panthea entirely in crystal; then Elfar, who killed Bicephalus and Tricephalus; then Elfinor, the magian, a kind of Salmoneus, who built over the sea a bridge of copper, sounding like thunder, "non imitabile fulmen aere et cornipedum pulsu simularat equorum;" then seven hundred princes; then Elficleos the Sage; then Elferon the Beautiful; then Oberon; then Mab,—wonderful fable, which, with a profound meaning, unites the sidereal and the microscopic, the infinitely great and the infinitely small.**

**And it is thus that the infusoria of Shakespeare is connected with the giant of Æschylus.**

**The fairy, drawn over the nose of sleeping men in her carriage, covered with the wing of a locust, by eight flies harnessed with the rays of the moon, and whipped with a gossamer,—the fairy atom has for ancestor the huge Titan, robber of stars, nailed on the Caucasus, one hand on the Caspian gates, the other on the portals of Ararat, one heel on the source of the Phasis, the other on the Validus-Murus, closing the passage between the mountain and the sea,—a colossus, whose immense shadow was, according as the rise or setting of light, projected by the sun, now on Europe as far as Corinth, now on Asia as far as Bangalore.**

**Nevertheless, Mab, who is also called Tanaquil, has all the wavering inconsistency of the dream. Under the name of Tanaquil she is the wife of Tarquin the Ancient; and she spins for young Servius Tullius the first tunic worn by a young Roman after leaving off the pretexta. Oberon, who turns out to be Numa, is her uncle. In "Huon de Bordeaux" she is called Gloriande, and has for lover Julius Cæsar, and Oberon is her son; in Spenser, she is called Gloriana, and Oberon is her father; in Shakespeare she is called Titania, and Oberon is her husband. Titania: this name unites Mab to the Titan, and Shakespeare to Æschylus.**

**[1]All the biography, sometimes rather puerile, even rather silly, of Bishop Myriel.—Lamartine: *Cours de Littérature* (Entretien LXXXIV. p. 385).**

## CHAPTER IV.

**An eminent man of our day, a celebrated historian a powerful orator, one of the former translators of Shakespeare, is mistaken, according to our views, when he regrets, or appears to regret, the slight influence of Shakespeare on the theatre of the nineteenth century. We cannot share that regret An influence of any sort, even that of Shakespeare, could but mar the originality of the literary movement of our epoch. "The system of Shakespeare," says the honourable and grave writer, with reference to that movement, "can furnish, it seems to me, the plans after which genius must henceforth work." We have never been of that opinion, and we have said so as far back as forty years ago.[1] For us, Shakespeare is a genius, and not a system. On this point we have already explained our views, and we mean soon to explain them at greater length; but let us state now that what Shakespeare has done, is done once for all,—it is impossible to do it over again. Admire or criticise, but do not recast. It is finished.**

**A distinguished critic who lately died,—M. Chaudesaigues,—lays a stress on this reproach: "Shakespeare," says he, "has been revived without being followed. The romantic school has not imitated Shakespeare. In that it is wrong." In that it is right. It is blamed for it; we praise it. The contemporary theatre is what it is, but it is itself. The contemporary theatre has for device, *Sum non sequor.* It belongs to no "system" It has its own law, and it accomplishes it. It has its own life, and it lives it.**

**The drama of Shakespeare expresses man at a given moment. Man passes away; that drama remains, having for eternal foundation, life, the heart, the world, and for surface the sixteenth century. That drama can neither be continued nor recomposed. Another age, another art.**

**The theatre of our day has not followed Shakespeare any more than it has followed Æschylus. And without reckoning all the other reasons that we shall note farther on, how perplexed would he be who wished to imitate and copy, in making a choice between these two poets! Æschylus and Shakespeare seem made to prove that contraries may be admirable. The point of departure of the one is absolutely opposite to the point of departure of the other. Æschylus is concentration; Shakespeare is diffusion. One must be much applauded because he is condensed, and the other because he is diffuse; to Æschylus unity, to Shakespeare ubiquity. Between them they divide God. And as such intellects are always complete, one feels in the condensed drama of Æschylus the free agitation of passion, and in the diffuse drama of Shakespeare the convergence of**

**all the rays of life. The one starts from unity and reaches a multiple; the other starts from the multiple and arrives at unity.**

**This appears strikingly evident, particularly when we compare "Hamlet" with "Orestes,"—extraordinary double page, obverse and reverse of the same idea, and which seems written expressly to prove to what an extent two different geniuses, making the same thing, will make two different things.**

**It is easy to see that the theatre of our day has, rightly or wrongly, traced out its own way between Greek unity and Shakespearian ubiquity.**

**[1]Preface to "Cromwell."**

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## CHAPTER V.

**Let us set aside for the present the question of contemporary art, and take up again the general question.**

**Imitation is always barren and bad.**

**As for Shakespeare,—since Shakespeare is the poet who claims our attention now,—he is, in the highest degree, a genius human and general; but like every true genius, he is at the same time an idiosyncratic and personal mind. Axiom: the poet starts from his own inner self to come to us. It is that which makes the poet inimitable.**

**Examine Shakespeare, dive into him, and see how determined he is to be himself. Do not expect any concession from him. It is not egotism, but it is stubbornness. He wills it. He gives to art his orders,—of course in the limits of his work; for neither the art of Æschylus, nor the art of Aristophanes, nor the art of Plautus, nor the art of Macchiavelli, nor the art of Calderon, nor the art of Molière, nor the art of Beaumarchais, nor any of the forms of art, deriving life each of them from the special life of a genius, would obey the orders given by Shakespeare. Art, thus understood, is vast equality and profound liberty; the region of the equals is also the region of the free.**

**One of the grandeurs of Shakespeare consists in his impossibility to be a model. In order to realize his idiosyncrasy, open one of his plays,—no matter which; it is always foremost and above all Shakespeare.**

**What more personal than "Troilus and Cressida"? A comic Troy! Here is "Much Ado about Nothing,"—a tragedy which ends with a burst of laughter. Here is the**

**"Winter's Tale,"—a pastoral drama. Shakespeare is at home in his work. Do you wish to see true despotism: look at his fancy. What arbitrary determination to dream! What despotic resolution in his vertiginous flight! What absoluteness in his indecision and wavering! The dream fills some of his plays to that degree that man changes his nature, and is the cloud more than the man. Angelo in "Measure for Measure" is a misty tyrant. He becomes disintegrated, and wears away. Leontes in the "Winter's Tale" is an Othello who is blown away. In "Cymbeline" one thinks that Iachimo will become an Iago, but he melts down. The dream is there,—everywhere. Watch Manilius, Posthumus, Hermione, Perdita, passing by. In the "Tempest," the Duke of Milan has "a brave son," who is like a dream in a dream. Ferdinand alone speaks of him, and no one but Ferdinand seems to have seen him. A brute becomes reasonable: witness the constable Elbow in "Measure for Measure." An idiot is all at once witty: witness Cloten in "Cymbeline." A King of Sicily is jealous of a King of Bohemia. Bohemia has a seashore. The shepherds pick up children there. Theseus, a duke, espouses Hippolyta, the Amazon. Oberon comes in also. For here it is Shakespeare's will to dream; elsewhere he thinks.**

**We say more: where he dreams he still thinks,—with a different but equal depth.**

**Let men of genius remain in peace in their originality. There is something wild in these mysterious civilizers. Even in their comedy, even in their buffoonery, even in their laughter, even in their smile, there is the unknown. In them is felt the sacred dread that belongs to art, and the all-powerful terror of the imaginary mixed with the real. Each of them is in his cavern, alone. They hear one another from afar, but never copy one another. We are not aware that the hippopotamus imitates the roar of the elephant, neither do lions imitate one another.**

**Diderot does not recast Bayle; Beaumarchais does not copy Plautus, and has no need of Davus to create Figaro. Piranesi is not inspired by Dædalus. Isaiah does not begin Moses over again.**

**One day, at St. Helena, M. De Las Cases said, "Sire, when you were master of Prussia, I would in your place have taken the sword of Frederick the Great, which is deposited in the tomb at Potsdam; and I would have worn it." "Fool!" replied Napoleon, "I had my own."**

**Shakespeare's work is absolute, sovereign, imperious, eminently solitary, unneighbourly, sublime in radiance, absurd in reflection, and must remain without a copy.**

**To imitate Shakespeare would be as insane as to imitate Racine would be stupid.**

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## CHAPTER VI.

**Let us agree, by the way, respecting a qualificative much used everywhere: *Profanum vulgus*,—the saying of a poet on which pedants lay great stress. This *profanum vulgus* is rather the weapon of everybody. Let us fix the meaning of this word. What is the *profanum vulgus?* The school says, "It is the people." And we, we say, "It is the school."**

**But let us first define this expression, "the school." When we say, "the school," what must be understood? Let us explain it. The school is the resultant of pedantry; the school is the literary excrescence of the budget; the school is intellectual mandarinship governing in the various authorized and official teachings, either of the press or of the State, from the theatrical *feuilleton* of the prefecture to the biographies and encyclopædias duly examined, stamped, and hawked about, and sometimes, as a refinement, made by republicans agreeable to the police; the school is the circumvallating classic and scholastic orthodoxy, the Homeric and Virgilian antiquity made use of by *literati* licensed by government,—a kind of China self-called Greece; the school is—summed up in one concretion which forms part of public order—all the knowledge of pedagogues, all the history of historiographers, all the poetry of laureates, all the philosophy of sophists, all the criticism of pedants, all the ferule of the "ignorantins," all the religion of bigots, all the modesty of prudes, all the metaphysics of those who change sides, all the justice of placemen, all the old age of the small young men who have undergone the operation, all the flattery of courtiers, all the diatribes of censer-bearers, all the independence of valets, all the certainty of short sights and of base souls. The school hates Shakespeare. It detects him in the very act of mingling with the people, going to and fro in public thoroughfares, "trivial," speaking the language of the people, uttering the human cry like any other man, welcome to those that he welcomes, applauded by hands black with tar, cheered by all the hoarse throats that proceed from labour and weariness. The drama of Shakespeare is the people; the school is indignant and says, "Odi profanum vulgus." There is demagogy in this poetry roaming at large; the author of "Hamlet" "panders to the mob."**

**Let it be so. The poet "panders to the mob."**

**If anything is great, it is that.**

**There in the foreground, everywhere, in full light, amidst the flourish of trumpets, are the powerful men followed by the gilded men. The poet does not see them, or, if he does, he disdains them. He lifts his eyes and looks at God; then he lowers his eyes and looks at the people. There in the depth of the shadow, nearly invisible, so much submerged that it is the night, is that fatal crowd, that vast and mournful heap of suffering, that venerable populace of the tattered and of the ignorant,—chaos of souls. That crowd of heads undulates obscurely like the waves of a nocturnal sea. From time to time there pass on that surface, like squalls over the water, catastrophes,—a war, a pestilence, a royal favourite, a famine. That causes a disturbance which lasts a short time, the depth of sorrow being immovable as the depth of the ocean. Despair deposits in us some weight as of lead. The last word of the abyss is stupor; therefore it is the night. It is, under the thick blackness, behind which all is indistinct, the mournful sea of the needy.**

**These overloaded beings are silent; they know nothing; they submit *Plectuntur Achivi*. They are hungry and cold. Their indecent flesh is seen through the holes in their tatters. Who makes those tatters? The purple. The nakedness of virgins comes from the nudity of odalisques. From the twisted rags of the daughters of the people fall pearls for the Fontanges and the Châteauroux. It is famine which gilds Versailles. The whole of that living and dying shadow moves; these larvæ are in the pangs of death; the mother's breast is dry; the father has no work; the brains have no light. If there is a book in that destitution, it resembles the pitcher, so insipid or corrupt is what it offers to the thirst of intellects. Mournful families!**

**The group of the little ones is wan. All die away and creep along, not having even the power to love; and unknown to them perhaps, while they crouch down and resign themselves, from all that vast unconsciousness in which Right dwells, from the rumbling murmur of those wretched breaths mingled together, proceeds an indescribable confused voice, mysterious mist of language, succeeding, syllable by syllable in the darkness, in uttering extraordinary words,—Future, Humanity, Liberty, Equality, Progress. And the poet listens, and he hears; and he looks, and he sees; and he bends lower and lower, and he weeps; and all at once, growing with a strange growth, drawing from all that darkness his own transfiguration, he stands erect, terrible and tender, above all those wretched ones,—those above as well as those below,—with flaming eyes.**

**And he demands a reckoning with a loud voice. And he says, Here is the effect! And he says, Here is the cause! Light is the remedy. *Erudimini*. And he looks like a great vase full of humanity shaken by the hand which is in the cloud, and from whence fall on the earth large drops,—fire for the oppressors, dew for the**

**oppressed. Ah, you find fault with that, you fellows! Well, then, we approve of it, we do! We find it just that some one speaks when all suffer. The ignorant who enjoy and the ignorant who suffer have an equal want of teaching. The law of fraternity is derived from the law of labour. To kill one another has had its day. The hour has come to love one another. It is to promulgate these truths that the poet is good. For that, he must be of the people; for that he must be of the populace,—that is to say, that, bringing progress, he should not recoil before the pressure of facts, however ugly the facts may be. The distance between the real and the ideal cannot be measured otherwise. Besides, to drag the cannon-ball a little completes Vincent de Paul. Hurrah, then, for the trivial promiscuousness, for the popular metaphor, for the great life in common with those exiles from joy who are catted the poor!—this is the first duty of poets. It is useful; it is necessary, that the breath of the people should fill those all-powerful souls. The people have something to say to them. It is good that there should be in Euripides a flavour of the herb-dealers at Athens, and in Shakespeare of the sailors of London.**

**Sacrifice to "the mob," O poet! Sacrifice to that unfortunate, disinherited, vanquished, vagabond, shoeless, famished, repudiated, despairing mob; sacrifice to it, if it must be and when it must be, thy repose, thy fortune, thy joy, thy country, thy liberty, thy life. The mob is the human race in misery. The mob is the mournful commencement of the people. The mob is the great victim of darkness. Sacrifice to it! Sacrifice thyself! Let thyself be hunted, let thyself be exiled as Voltaire to Ferney, as D'Aubigné to Geneva, as Dante to Verona, as Juvenal to Syene, as Tacitus to Methymna, as Æschylus to Gela, as John to Patmos, as Elias to Horeb, as Thucydides to Thrace, as Isaiah to Esiongeber! Sacrifice to the mob. Sacrifice to it thy gold, and thy blood which is more than thy gold, and thy thought which is more than thy blood, and thy love which is more than thy thought; sacrifice to it everything except justice. Receive its complaint; listen to its faults, and to the faults of others. Listen to what it has to confess and to denounce to thee. Stretch forth to it the ear, the hand, the arm, the heart. Do everything for it, excepting evil. Alas! it suffers so much, and it knows nothing. Correct it, warm it, instruct it, guide it, bring it up. Put it to the school of honesty. Make it spell truth; show it that alphabet, reason; teach it to read virtue, probity, generosity, mercy. Hold thy book wide open. Be there, attentive, vigilant, kind, faithful, humble. Light up the brain, inflame the mind, extinguish egotism, show good example. The poor are privation: be abnegation. Teach! irradiate! They need thee; thou art their great thirst To learn is the first step; to live is but the second. Be at their order, dost thou hear? Be ever there, light! For it is beautiful, on this**

**sombre earth, during this dark life, short passage to something else, it is beautiful that Force should have Right for a master, that Progress should have Courage as a chief, that Intelligence should have Honour as a sovereign, that Conscience should have Duty as a despot, that Civilization should have Liberty as a queen, that Ignorance should have a servant,—Light.**

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## BOOK V.

## THE MINDS AND THE MASSES.

### CHAPTER I.

**For the last eighty years memorable things have been done. A wonderful heap of demolished materials covers the pavement.**

**What is done is but little by the side of what remains to be done.**

**To destroy is the task: to build is the work. Progress demolishes with the left hand; it is with the right hand that it builds.**

**The left hand of Progress is called Force; the right hand is called Mind.**

**There is at this hour a great deal of useful destruction accomplished; all the old cumbersome civilization is, thanks to our fathers, cleared away. It is well, it is finished, it is thrown down, it is on the ground. Now, up with you all, intellects! to work, to labour, to fatigue, to duty; it is necessary to construct.**

**Here three questions: To construct what? To construct where? To construct how?**

**We reply: To construct the people. To construct the people according to the laws of progress. To construct the people according to the laws of light.**

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### CHAPTER II.

**To work for the people,—that is the great and urgent necessity.**

**The human mind—an important thing to say at this minute—has a greater need of the ideal even than of the real.**

**It is by the real that we exist; it is by the ideal that we live. Now, do you wish to realize the difference? Animals exist, man lives.**

**To live, is to understand. To live, is to smile at the present, to look toward posterity over the wall. To live, is to have in one's self a balance, and to weigh in it the good and the evil. To live, is to have justice, truth, reason, devotion, probity, sincerity, common-sense, right, and duty nailed to the heart. To live, is to know what one is worth, what one can do and should do. Life is conscience. Cato would not rise before Ptolemy. Cato lived.**

**Literature is the secretion of civilization, poetry of the ideal. That is why literature is one of the wants of societies. That is why poetry is a hunger of the soul. That is why poets are the first instructors of the people. That is why Shakespeare must be translated in France. That is why Molière must be translated in England. That is why comments must be made on them. That is why there must be a vast public literary domain. That is why all poets, all philosophers, all thinkers, all the producers of the greatness of the mind must be translated, commented on, published, printed, reprinted, stereotyped, distributed, explained, recited, spread abroad, given to all, given cheaply, given at cost price, given for nothing.**

**Poetry evolves heroism. M. Royer-Collard, that original and ironical friend of routine, was, taken all in all, a wise and noble spirit Some one we know heard him say one day, "Spartacus is a poet."**

**That wonderful and consoling Ezekiel—the tragic revealer of progress—has all kinds of singular passages full of a profound meaning: "The voice said to me: Fill the palm of thy hand with red-hot coals, and spread them on the city." And elsewhere: "The spirit having gone into them, everywhere where the spirit went, they went" And again: "A hand was stretched towards me. It held a roll which was a book. The voice said to me: Eat this roll. I opened the lips and I ate the book. And it was sweet in my mouth as honey." To eat the book is a strange and striking image,—the whole formula of perfectibility, which above is knowledge, and below, teaching.**

**We have just said, "Literature is the secretion of civilization." Do you doubt it? Open the first statistics you come across.**

**Here is one which we find under our hand: Bagne de Toulon, 1862. Three thousand and ten prisoners. Of these three thousand and ten convicts, forty know a little more than to read and write, two hundred and eighty-seven know how to read and write, nine hundred and four read badly and write badly, seventeen hundred and seventy-nine know neither how to read nor write. In this wretched crowd all the merely mechanical trades are represented by numbers decreasing according as they rise toward the enlightened pursuits, and you arrive at this final result:**

**goldsmiths and jewellers, four; ecclesiastics, three; lawyers, two; comedians, one; artist musicians, one; men of letters, not one.**

**The transformation of the crowd into the people,—profound labour! It is to this labour that the men called socialists have devoted themselves during the last forty years. The author of this book, however insignificant he may be, is one of the oldest in this labour; "Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné" dates from 1828, and "Claude Gueux" from 1834. He claims his place among these philosophers because it is a place of persecution. A certain hatred of socialism, very blind, but very general, has been at work for fifteen or sixteen years, and is still at work most bitterly among the influential classes. (Classes, then, are still in existence?) Let it not be forgotten, socialism, true socialism, has for its end the elevation of the masses to the civic dignity, and therefore its principal care is for moral and intellectual cultivation. The first hunger is ignorance; socialism wishes then, above all, to instruct. That does not hinder socialism from being calumniated, and socialists from being denounced. To most of the infuriated, trembling cowards who have their say at the present moment, these reformers are public enemies. They are guilty of everything that has gone wrong. "O Romans!" said Tertullian, "we are just, kind, thinking, lettered, honest men. We meet to pray, and we love you because you are our brethren. We are gentle and peaceable like little children, and we wish for concord among men. Nevertheless, O Romans! if the Tiber overflows, or if the Nile does not, you cry, 'To the lions with the Christians!'"**

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## CHAPTER III.

**The democratic idea, the new bridge of civilization, undergoes at this moment the formidable trial of overweight. Every other idea would certainly give way under the load that it is made to bear. Democracy proves its solidity by the absurdities that are heaped on, without shaking it. It must resist everything that people choose to place on it. At this moment they try to make it carry despotism.**

**The people have no need of liberty,—such was the pass-word of a certain innocent and duped school, the head of which has been dead some years. That poor honest dreamer believed in good faith that men can keep progress with them when they turn out liberty. We have heard him put forth, probably without meaning it, this aphorism: Liberty is good for the rich. These kinds of maxims have the disadvantage of not being prejudicial to the establishment of empires.**

**No, no, no! Nothing out of liberty.**

**Servitude is the blind soul. Can you figure to yourself a man blind voluntarily? This terrible thing exists. There are willing slaves. A smile in irons! Can anything be more hideous? He who is not free is not a man; he who is not free has no sight, no knowledge, no discernment, no growth, no comprehension, no will, no faith, no love; he has no wife, he has no children: he has a female and young ones; he lives not,—*ab luce principium.* Liberty is the apple of the eye. Liberty is the visual organ of progress.**

**Because liberty has inconveniences, and even perils, to wish to create civilization without it is just the same as to try cultivation without the sun; the sun is also a censurable heavenly body. One day, in the too beautiful summer of 1829, a critic, now forgotten,—and wrongly, for he was not without some talent,—M. P., suffering from the heat, sharpened his pen, saying, "I am going to excoriate the sun."**

**Certain social theories, very distinct from socialism such as we understand and want it, have gone astray. Let us discard all that resembles the convent, the barrack, the cell and the straight-line system. Paraguay, minus the Jesuits, is Paraguay just the same. To give a new fashion to evil is not a useful task. To recommence the old slavery is idiotic. Let the nations of Europe beware of a despotism made anew from materials they have to some extent themselves supplied. Such a thing, cemented with a special philosophy, might well last. We have just mentioned the theorists, some of whom otherwise right and sincere, who, by dint of fearing the dispersion of activities and energies, and of what they call "anarchy," have arrived at an almost Chinese acceptation of absolute social concentration. They turn their resignation into a doctrine. Provided man eats and drinks, all is right. The happiness of the beast is the solution. But this is a happiness which some other men would call by a different name.**

**We dream for nations something else besides a felicity solely made up of obedience. The bastinado procures that sort of felicity for the Turkish fellah, the knout for the Russian serf, and the cat-o'-nine-tails for the English soldier. These socialists by the side of socialism come from Joseph de Maistre, and from Ancillon, without suspecting it perhaps; for the ingenuousness of these theorists rallied to the *fait accompli* has—or fancies it has—democratic intentions, and speaks energetically of the "principles of '89." Let these involuntary philosophers of a possible despotism think a moment. To teach the masses a doctrine against liberty; to cram intellects with appetites and fatalism, a certain situation being given; to saturate it with materialism; and to run the risk of the construction which might proceed from it,—that would be to understand progress in the**

**fashion of the worthy man who applauded a new gibbet, and who exclaimed, "This is all right! We have had till now but the old wooden gallows. To-day the age advances; and here we are with a good stone gibbet, which will do for our children and grandchildren!"**

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**CHAPTER IV.**

**To enjoy a full stomach, a satisfied intestine, a satiated belly, is doubtless something, for it is the enjoyment of the brute. However, one may place one's ambition higher.**

**Certainly, a good salary is a fine thing. To tread on this firm ground, high wages, is pleasant. The wise man likes to want nothing. To insure his own position is the characteristic of an intelligent man. An official chair, with ten thousand sesterces a year, is a graceful and convenient seat. Great emoluments give a fresh complexion and good health. One lives to an old age in pleasant, well-paid sinecures. The high financial world, rich in plentiful profits, is a place agreeable to live in. To be well at Court settles a family well and brings a fortune. As for myself, I prefer to all these solid comforts the old leaky vessel in which Bishop Quodvultdeus embarks with a smile.**

**There is something beyond gorging one's self. The goal of man is not the goal of the animal.**

**A moral enhancement is necessary. The life of nations, like the life of individuals, has its minutes of depression; these minutes pass, certainly, but no trace of them ought to remain. Man, at this hour, tends to fall into the stomach. Man must be replaced in the heart; man must be replaced in the brain. The brain,—behold the sovereign that must be restored! The social question requires to-day, more than ever, to be examined on the side of human dignity.**

**To show man the human end, to ameliorate intelligence first, the animal afterward, to disdain the flesh as long as the thought is despised, and to give the example on their own flesh,—such is the actual, immediate, urgent duty of writers.**

**It is what men of genius have done at all times.**

**You ask in what poets can be useful? In imbuing civilization with light,-only that.**

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## CHAPTER V.

**Up to this day there has been a literature of *literati*. In France, particularly, as we have said, literature had a disposition to form a caste. To be a poet was something like being a mandarin. Words did not all belong by right to the language. The dictionary granted or did not grant the registration. The dictionary had a will of its own. Imagine the botanist declaring to a vegetable that it does not exist, and Nature timidly offering an insect to entomology, which refuses it as incorrect. Imagine astronomy cavilling at the stars. We recollect having heard an Academician, now dead, say in full academy that French had been spoken in France only in the seventeenth century, and then for only twelve years,—we do not remember which twelve. Let us give up, for it is time, this order of ideas; democracy requires it. The actual enlarging of thoughts needs something else. Let us leave the college, the conclave, the cell, the weak taste, weak art, the small chapel. Poetry is not a coterie. There is at this hour an effort made to galvanize dead things. Let us strive against this tendency. Let us insist on the truths which are urgent. The *chefs-d'œuvre* recommended by the manual of bachelorship, compliments in verse and in prose, tragedies soaring over the head of some king, inspiration in full official dress, the brilliant nonentities fixing laws on poetry, the *Arts poétiques* which forget La Fontaine, and for which Molière is doubtful, the Planats castrating the Corneilles, prudish tongues, the thoughts enclosed between four walls, and limited by Quintilian, Longinus, Boileau, and La Harpe,—all that, although official and public teaching is filled and saturated with it, all that belongs to the past. Some particular epoch, which is called the grand century, and for a certainty the fine century, is nothing else in reality but a literary monologue. Is it possible to realize such a strange thing,—a literature which is an aside? It seems as if one read on the frontal of art "No admittance." As for ourselves, we understand poetry only with the door wide open. The hour has struck for hoisting the "All for All." What is needed by civilization, henceforth a grown-up woman, is a popular literature.**

**1830 has opened a debate, literary on the surface, at the bottom social and human. The moment is come to close the debate. We close it by asking a literature having in view this purpose: "The People."**

**The author of these pages wrote, thirty-one years ago, in the preface to "Lucrèce Borgia," a few words often repeated since: "Le poète a charge d'âmes." He would add here, if it were worth saying, that, allowing for possible error, the words, uttered by his conscience, have been his rule throughout life.**

## CHAPTER VI.

**Macchiavelli had a strange idea of the people. To heap the measure, to overflow the cup, to exaggerate horror in the case of the prince, to increase the crushing in order to stir up the oppressed to revolt, to cause idolatry to change into a curse, to push the masses to extremities,—such seems to be his policy. His "yes" signifies "no." He loads the despot with despotism in order to make him burst. The tyrant becomes in his hands a hideous projectile, which will break to pieces. Macchiavelli conspires. For whom? Against whom? Guess. His apotheosis of kings is just the thing to make regicides. On the head of his prince he places a diadem of crimes, a tiara of vices, a halo of baseness; and he invites you to adore his monster, with the air of a man expecting an avenger. He glorifies evil with a squint toward the darkness,—the darkness wherein is Harmodius. Macchiavelli, the getter-up of princely outrages, the valet of the Medici and of the Borgias, had in his youth been put to the rack for having admired Brutus and Cassius. He had perhaps plotted with the Soderini the deliverance of Florence. Does he recollect it? Does he continue? His advice is followed, like the lightning, by a low rumbling in the cloud,—alarming reverberation. What did he mean to say? On whom has he a design? Is the advice for or against him to whom he gives it? One day, at Florence, in the garden of Cosmo Ruccelaï, there being present the Duke of Mantua and John de Medici, who afterward commanded the Black Bands of Tuscany, Varchi, the enemy of Macchiavelli, heard him say to the two princes: "Let the people read no book,—not even mine." It is curious to compare with this remark the advice given by Voltaire to the Duke de Choiseul,—at the same time advice to the minister, and insinuation for the king: "Let the boobies read our nonsense. There is no danger in reading, my lord. What can a great king like the King of France fear? The people are but rabble, and the books are but trash." Let them read nothing, let them read everything: these two pieces of contrary advice coincide more than one would think. Voltaire, with hidden claws, is purring at the feet of the king, Voltaire and Macchiavelli are two formidable indirect revolutionists, dissimilar in everything, and yet identical in reality by their profound hatred, disguised in flattery, of the master. The one is malignant, the other is sinister. The princes of the sixteenth century had as theorist on their infamies, and as enigmatical courtier, Macchiavelli, an enthusiast dark at heart. The flattery of a sphinx,—terrible thing! Better yet be flattered, like Louis XV., by a cat.**

**Conclusion: Make the people read Macchiavelli, and make them read Voltaire.**

**Macchiavelli will inspire them with horror of, and Voltaire with contempt for, crowned guilt.**

**But the hearts should turn, above all, toward the grand pure poets, whether they be sweet like Virgil or bitter like Juvenal.**

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## CHAPTER VII.

**The progress of man by the education of minds,—there is no safety but in that. Teach! learn! All the revolutions of the future are enclosed and imbedded in this phrase: Gratuitous and obligatory instruction.**

**It is by the unfolding of works of the highest order that this vast intellectual teaching should be crowned. At the top the men of genius.**

**Wherever there is a gathering of men, there ought to be in a special place, a public expositor of the great thinkers.**

**By a great thinker we mean a beneficent thinker.**

**The perpetual presence of the beautiful in their works maintains poets at the summit of teaching.**

**No one can foresee the quantity of light which will be brought forth by letting the people be in communication with men of genius. This combination of the hearts of the people with the heart of the poet will be the Voltaic pile of civilization.**

**Will the people understand this magnificent teaching? Certainly. We know of nothing too lofty for the people. The people are a great soul. Have you ever gone on a fête-day to a theatre open gratuitously to all? What do you think of that auditory? Do you know of any other more spontaneous and intelligent? Do you know, even in the forest, of a vibration more profound? The court of Versailles admires like a well-drilled regiment; the people throw themselves passionately into the beautiful. They pack together, crowd, amalgamate, combine, and knead themselves in the theatre,—a living paste that the poet is about to mould. The powerful thumb of Molière will presently make its mark on it; the nail of Corneille will scratch this ill-shaped heap. Whence does that heap come? Whence does it proceed? From the Courtille, from the Porcherons, from the Cunette; it is shoeless, it is bare-armed, it is ragged. Silence! This is the human block.**

**The house is crowded, the vast multitude looks, listens, loves; all consciences, deeply moved, throw off their inner fire; all eyes glisten; the huge beast with a**

**thousand heads is there,—the Mob of Burke, the *Plebs* of Titus Livius, the *Fex urbis* of Cicero. It caresses the beautiful; smiling at it with the grace of a woman. It is literary in the most refined sense of the word; nothing equals the delicacy of this monster. The tumultuous crowd trembles, blushes, palpitates. Its modesty is surprising; the crowd is a virgin. No prudery however; this brute is not brutal. Not a sympathy escapes it; it has in itself the whole keyboard, from passion to irony, from sarcasm to sobbing. Its compassion is more than compassion; it is real mercy. God is felt in it. All at once the sublime passes, and the sombre electricity of the abyss heaves up suddenly all this pile of hearts and entrails; enthusiasm effects a transfiguration. And now, is the enemy at the gates, is the country in danger? Appeal to that populace, and it would enact the sublime drama of Thermopylæ. Who has called forth such a metamorphosis? Poetry.**

**The multitude (and in this lies their grandeur) are profoundly open to the ideal. When they come in contact with lofty art they are pleased, they shudder. Not a detail escapes them. The crowd is one liquid and living expanse capable of vibration. A mass is a sensitive-plant. Contact with the beautiful agitates ecstatically the surface of multitudes,—sure sign that the depth is sounded. A rustling of leaves, a mysterious breath, passes, the crowd trembles under the sacred insufflation of the abyss.**

**And even where the man of the people is not in a crowd, he is yet a good hearer of great things. His ingenuousness is honest, his curiosity healthy. Ignorance is a longing. His near connection with Nature renders him subject to the holy emotion of the true. He has, toward poetry, secret natural desires which he does not suspect himself. All the teachings are due to the people. The more divine the light, the more is it made for this simple soul. We would have in the villages a pulpit from which Homer should be explained to the peasants.**

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## CHAPTER VIII.

**Too much matter is the evil of our day. Hence a certain dulness.**

**It is necessary to restore some ideal in the human mind. Whence shall you take your ideal? Where is it? The poets, the philosophers, the thinkers are the urns. The ideal is in Æschylus, in Isaiah, in Juvenal, in Alighieri, in Shakespeare. Throw Æschylus, throw Isaiah, throw Juvenal, throw Dante, throw Shakespeare into the deep soul of the human race.**

**Pour Job, Solomon, Pindar, Ezekiel, Sophocles, Euripides, Herodotus, Theocritus, Plautus, Lucretius, Virgil, Terence, Horace, Catullus, Tacitus, Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, Tertullian, Petrarch, Pascal, Milton, Descartes, Corneille, La Fontaine, Montesquieu, Diderot, Rousseau, Beaumarchais, Sedaine, André Chenier, Kant, Byron, Schiller,—pour all these souls into man. And with them pour all the wits from Æsop up to Molière, all the intellects from Plato up to Newton, all the encyclopædists from Aristotle up to Voltaire.**

**By that means, while curing the illness for the moment, you will establish forever the health of the human mind.**

**You will cure the middle class and found the people.**

**As we have said just now, after the destruction which has delivered the world, you will construct the edifice which shall make it prosper.**

**What an aim,—to make the people! Principles combined with science; every possible quantity of the absolute introduced by degrees into the fact; Utopia treated successively by every mode of realization,—by political economy, by philosophy, by physics, by chemistry, by dynamics, by logic, by art; union replacing little by little antagonism, and unity replacing union; for religion God, for priest the father, for prayer virtue, for field the whole earth, for language the verb, for law the right, for motive-power duty, for hygiene labour, for economy universal peace, for canvas the very life, for the goal progress, for authority liberty, for people the man,—such is the simplification.**

**And at the summit the ideal.**

**The ideal!—inflexible type of perpetual progress.**

**To whom belong men of genius, if not to thee, people? They do belong to thee; they are thy sons and thy fathers. Thou givest birth to them, and they teach thee. They open in thy chaos vistas of light. Children, they have drunk thy sap. They have leaped in the universal matrix, humanity. Each of thy phases, people, is an avatar. The deep essence of life, it is in thee that it must be looked for. Thou art the great bosom. Geniuses are begotten from thee, mysterious crowd.**

**Let them therefore return to thee.**

**People, the author, God, dedicates them to thee.**

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## BOOK VI.

## THE BEAUTIFUL THE SERVANT OF THE TRUE.

### CHAPTER I.

**Ah, minds, be useful! Be of some service. Do not be fastidious when it is necessary to be efficient and good. Art for art may be beautiful, but art for progress is more beautiful yet. To dream revery is well, to dream Utopia is better. Ah, you must think? Then think of making man better. You must dream? Here is the dream for you,—the ideal. The prophet seeks solitude, but not isolation. He unravels and untwists the threads of humanity, tied and rolled in a skein in his soul; he does not break them. He goes into the desert to think—of whom? Of the multitude. It is not to the forests that he speaks; it is to the cities, It is not at the grass bending to the wind that he looks; it is at man. It is not against lions that he wars; it is against tyrants. Woe to thee, Ahab! woe to thee, Hosea! woe to you, kings! woe to you, Pharaohs! is the cry of the great solitary one. Then he weeps.**

**For what? For that eternal captivity of Babylon, undergone by Israel formerly, undergone by Poland, by Roumania, by Hungary, by Venice to-day. He grows old, the good and dark thinker; he watches, he lies in wait, he listens, he looks,—ear in the silence, eye in the night, claw half stretched toward the wicked. Go and speak to him, then, of art for art, to that cenobite of the ideal. He has his aim, and he walks straight toward it; and his aim is this: improvement. He devotes himself to it.**

**He does not belong to himself; he belongs to his apostleship. He is intrusted with that immense care,—the progress of the human race. Genius is not made for genius, it is made for man. Genius on earth is God giving himself. Each time that a masterpiece appears, it is a distribution of God that takes place. The masterpiece is a variety of the miracle. Thence, in all religions, and among all peoples, comes faith in divine men. They deceive themselves, those who think that we deny the divinity of Christs.**

**At the point now reached by the social question, everything should be action in common. Forces isolated frustrate one another; the ideal and the real strengthen each other. Art necessarily aids science. These two wheels of progress should turn together.**

**Generation of new talents, noble group of writers and poets, legion of young men, O living posterity of my country, your elders love and salute you! Courage! let us consecrate ourselves. Let us devote ourselves to the good, to the true, to the just. In that there is goodness.**

**Some pure lovers of art, affected by a preoccupation which in its way has its dignity and nobleness, discard this formula, "Art for progress," the Beautiful Useful, fearing lest the useful should deform the beautiful. They tremble lest they should see attached to the fine arms of the Muse the coarse hands of the drudge. According to them, the ideal may become perverted by too much contact with reality. They are solicitous for the sublime if it is lowered as far as humanity. Ah, they are mistaken.**

**The useful, far from circumscribing the sublime, increases it. The application of the sublime to human things produces unexpected *chefs-d'œuvre*. The useful, considered in itself and as an element combining with the sublime, is of several kinds; there is the useful which is tender, and there is the useful which is indignant. Tender, it refreshes the unfortunate and creates the social epopee; indignant, it flagellates the wicked, and creates the divine satire. Moses hands the rod to Jesus; and after having caused the water to gush from the rock, that august rod, the very same, drives the vendors from the sanctuary.**

**What! art should grow less because it has expanded? No. One service more is one more beauty.**

**But people cry out: To undertake the cure of social evils; to amend the codes; to denounce the law to the right; to pronounce those hideous words, "bagne," "galley-slave," "convict," "girl of the town;" to control the police-registers; to contract the dispensaries; to investigate wages and the want of work; to taste the black bread of the poor; to seek labour for the work-girl; to confront fashionable idleness with ragged sloth; to throw down the partition of ignorance; to open schools; to teach little children how to read; to attack shame, infamy, error, vice, crime, want of conscience; to preach the multiplication of spelling-books; to proclaim the equality of the sun; to ameliorate the food of intellects and of hearts; to give meat and drink; to claim solutions for problems and shoes for naked feet,—that is not the business of the azure. Art is the azure.**

**Yes, art is the azure; but the azure from above, from which falls the ray which swells the corn, makes the maize yellow and the apple round, gilds the orange, sweetens the grape. I repeat it, one service more is one more beauty. At all events, where is the diminution? To ripen the beet-root, to water the potatoes, to thicken the lucern, the clover, and the hay; to be a fellow-workman with the ploughman, the vine-dresser, and the gardener,—that does not deprive the heavens of one star. Ah, immensity does not despise utility, and what does it lose by it? Does the vast vital fluid that we call magnetic or electric lighten less**

**splendidly the depth of the clouds because it consents to perform the office of pilot to a bark, and to keep always turned to the north the small needle that is trusted to it, the huge guide? Is the aurora less magnificent, has it less purple and emerald, does it undergo any decrease of majesty, of grace and radiancy, because, foreseeing the thirst of a fly, it carefully secretes in the flower the drop of dew which the bee requires?**

**Yet, people insist: To compose social poetry, human poetry, popular poetry; to grumble against the evil and for the good; to promote public passions; to insult despots; to make rascals despair; to emancipate man before he is of age; to push souls forward and darkness backward; to know that there are thieves and tyrants; to clean penal cells; to empty the pail of public filth,—what! Polyhymnia, sleeves tucked up to do such dirty work? Oh, for shame!**

**Why not?**

**Homer was the geographer and the historian of his time, Moses the legislator of his, Juvenal the judge of his, Dante the theologian of his, Shakespeare the moralist of his, Voltaire the philosopher of his. No region, in speculation or in real fact, is shut to the mind. Here a horizon, there wings; right for all to soar.**

**For certain sublime beings, to soar is to serve. In the desert not a drop of water,—a horrible thirst; the wretched file of pilgrims drag along overcome. All at once, in the horizon, above a wrinkle in the sands, a griffin is seen soaring, and all the caravan cry out, "There is water there!"**

**What thinks Æschylus of art as art? Certainly, if ever a poet was a poet, it is Æschylus. Listen to his reply. It is in the "Frogs" of Aristophanes, line 1039. Æschylus speaks:—**

**"Since the beginning of time, the illustrious poet has served men. Orpheus has taught the horror of murder, Musæus oracles and medicine, Hesiod agriculture, and that divine Homer, heroism. And I, after Homer, I have sung Patroclus, and Teucer the lion-hearted; so that every citizen should try to resemble the great men."**

**As all the sea is salt, so all the Bible is poetry. This poetry talks politics at its own hours. Open 1 Samuel, chapter VIII. The Jewish people demand a king:**

**"...And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.... And Samuel told all the words of the Lord**

**unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.... And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day."**

**Samuel, we see, denies the right divine; Deuteronomy shakes the altar,—the false altar, let us observe; but is not the next altar always the false altar? "You shall demolish the altars of the false gods. You shall seek God where he dwells." It is almost Pantheism. Because it takes part in human things, is democratic here, iconoclast there, is that book less magnificent and less supreme? If poetry is not in the Bible, where is it?**

**You say: The muse is made to sing, to love, to believe, to pray. Yes and no. Let us understand each other. To sing whom? The void. To love what? One's self. To believe in what? The dogma. To pray to what? The idol. No, here is the truth: To sing the ideal, to love humanity, to believe in progress, to pray to the infinite.**

**Take care, you who are tracing those circles round the poet, you put him beyond man. That the poet should be beyond humanity in one way,—by the wings, by the immense flight, by the sudden possible disappearance in the fathomless,—is well; it must be so, but on condition of reappearance. He may depart, but he must return. Let him have wings for the infinite, provided he has feet for the earth, and that, after having been seen flying, he is seen walking. Let him become man again, after he has gone out of humanity. After he has been seen an archangel, let him be once more a brother. Let the star which is in that eye weep a tear, and that tear be the human tear. Thus, human and superhuman, he shall be the poet. But to be altogether beyond man, is not to be. Show me thy foot, genius, and let us see if, like myself, thou hast earthly dust on thy heel.**

**If thou hast not some of that dust, if thou hast never walked in my pathway, thou dost not know me and I do not know thee. Go away. Thou believest thyself an angel, thou art but a bird.**

**Help from the strong for the weak, help from the great for the small, help from the free for the slaves, help from the thinkers for the ignorant, help from the solitary**

**for the multitudes,—such is the law, from Isaiah to Voltaire. He who does not follow that law may be a genius, but he is only a useless genius. By not handling the things of the earth, he thinks to purify himself; he annuls himself. He is the refined, the delicate, he may be the exquisite genius; he is not the great genius. Any one, roughly useful, but useful, has the right to ask on seeing that good-for-nothing genius: "Who is this idler?" The amphora which refuses to go to the fountain deserves the hooting of the pitchers.**

**Great is he who consecrates himself! Even when overcome, he remains serene, and his misery is happiness. No, it is not a bad thing for the poet to meet face to face with duty. Duty has a stern resemblance to the ideal. The act of doing one's duty is worth all the trial it costs. No, the jostling with Cato is not to be avoided. No, no, no; truth, honesty, teaching the crowds, human liberty, manly virtue, conscience, are not things to disdain. Indignation and emotion are but one faculty turned toward the two sides of mournful human slavery; and those who are capable of anger are capable of love. To level the tyrant and the slave, what a magnificent effort! Now, the whole of one side of actual society is tyrant, and all the other side is slave. To straighten this out will be a wonderful thing to accomplish; yet it will be done. All thinkers must work with that end in view. They will gain greatness in that work. To be the servant of God in the march of progress and the apostle of God with the people,—such is the law which regulates the growth of genius.**

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## CHAPTER II.

**There are two poets,—the poet of caprice and the poet of logic; and there is a third poet, a component of both, amending them one by the other, completing them one by the other, and summing them up in a loftier entity,—the two statures in a single one. The third is the first. He has caprice, and he follows the wind. He has logic, and he follows duty. The first writes the Canticle of Canticles, the second writes Leviticus, the third writes the Psalms and the Prophecies. The first is Horace, the second is Lucan, the third is Juvenal. The first is Pindar, the second is Hesiod, the third is Homer.**

**No loss of beauty results from goodness. Is the lion less beautiful than the tiger, because it has the faculty of merciful emotion? Does that jaw which opens to let the infant fall into the hands of the mother deprive that mane of its majesty? Does the vast noise of the roaring vanish from that terrible mouth because it has licked**

**Androcles? The genius which does not help, even if graceful, is deformed. A prodigy without love is a monster. Let us love! let us love!**

**To love has never hindered from pleasing. Where have you seen one form of the good excluding the other? On the contrary, all that is good is connected. Let us, however, understand each other. It does not follow that to have one quality implies necessarily the possession of the other; but it would be strange that one quality added to another should make less. To be useful, is but to be useful; to be beautiful is but to be beautiful; to be useful and beautiful is to be sublime. That is what Saint Paul is in the first century, Tacitus and Juvenal in the second, Dante in the thirteenth, Shakespeare in the sixteenth, Milton and Molière in the seventeenth.**

**We have just now recalled a saying become famous: "Art for art." Let us, once for all, explain ourselves in this question. If faith can be placed in an affirmation very general and very often repeated (we believe honestly), these words, "Art for art," would have been written by the author of this book himself. Written? Never! You may read, from the first to the last line, all that we have published; you will not find these words. It is the opposite which is written throughout our works, and, we insist on it, in our entire life. As for these words in themselves, how far are they real? Here is the fact, which several of our contemporaries remember as well as we do. One day, thirty-five years ago, in a discussion between critics and poets on Voltaire's tragedies, the author of this book threw out this suggestion: "This tragedy is not a tragedy. It is not men who live, it is sentences which speak in it! Rather a hundred times 'Art for art!'" This remark turned, doubtless involuntarily, from its true sense to serve the wants of discussion, has since taken, to the great surprise of him who had uttered it, the proportions of a formula. It is this opinion, limited to "Alzire" and to the "Orpheline de la Chine," and incontestable in that restricted application, which has been turned into a perfect declaration of principles, and an axiom to inscribe on the banner of art.**

**This point settled, let us go on.**

**Between two verses, the one by Pindar, deifying a coachman or glorifying the brass nails of the wheel of a chariot, the other by Archilochus, so powerful that, after having read it, Jeffreys would leave off his career of crimes and would hang himself on the gallows prepared by him for honest people,—between these two verses, of equal beauty, I prefer that of Archilochus.**

**In times anterior to history, when poetry is fabulous and legendary, it has a Promethean grandeur. What composes this grandeur? Utility. Orpheus tames**

**wild animals; Amphion builds cities; the poet, tamer and architect, Linus aiding Hercules, Musæus assisting Dædalus, poetry a civilizing power,—such is the origin. Tradition agrees with reason. The common-sense of peoples is not deceived in that. It always invents fables in the sense of truth. Everything is great in those magnifying distances. Well, then, the wild-beast-taming poet that you admire in Orpheus, recognize him in Juvenal.**

**We insist on Juvenal. Few poets have been more insulted, more contested, more calumniated. Calumny against Juvenal has been drawn at such long date that it lasts yet. It passes from one literary clown to another. These grand haters of evil are hated by all the flatterers of power and success. The mob of fawning sophists, of writers who have around the neck the mark of their slavery, of bullying historiographers, of scholiasts kept and fed, of court and school followers, stand in the way of the glory of the punishers and avengers. They croak around those eagles. People do not willingly render justice to the dispensers of justice. They hinder the masters and rouse the indignation of the lackeys. There is such a thing as the indignation of baseness.**

**Moreover, the diminutives cannot do less than help one another, and Cæsarion must at least have Tyrannion as a support The pedant snaps the ferules for the benefit of the satrap. There is for this kind of work a literary sycophancy and an official pedagogism. These poor, dear-paying vices; these excellent indulgent crimes; his Highness Rufinus; his Majesty Claudius; that august Madame Messalina who gives such beautiful *fêtes*, and pensions out of her privy purse, and who lasts and who is perpetuated, always crowned, calling herself Theodora, then Fredegonde, then Agnes, then Margaret of Burgundy, then Isabel of Bavaria, then Catherine de Medici, then Catherine of Russia, then Caroline of Naples, etc.,—all these great lords, crimes, all these fine ladies, turpitudes, shall they have the sorrow of witnessing the triumph of Juvenal! No. War with the scourge in the name of sceptres! War with the rod in the name of the shop! That is well! Go on, courtiers, clients, eunuchs, and scribes. Go on, publicans and pharisees. You will not hinder the republic from thanking Juvenal, or the temple from approving Jesus.**

**Isaiah, Juvenal, Dante,—they are virgins. Observe their eyes cast down. There is chastity in the anger of the just against the unjust. The Imprecation can be as holy as the Hosanna; and indignation, honest indignation, has the very purity of virtue. In point of whiteness, the foam has no reason to envy the snow.**

## CHAPTER III.

History proves the working partnership of art and progress. *Dictus ob hoc lenire tigres.* Rhythm is a power,—a power that the Middle Ages recognize and submit to not less than antiquity. The second barbarism, feudal barbarism, dreads also this power,—poetry. The barons, not over-timid, are abashed before the poet. Who is this man? They fear lest a manly song be sung. The spirit of civilization is with this unknown. The old donjons full of carnage open their wild eyes, and suspect the darkness; anxiety seizes hold of them. Feudality trembles; the den is disturbed. The dragons and the hydras are ill at ease. Why? Because an invisible god is there.

It is curious to find this power of poetry in countries where unsociableness is deepest, particularly in England, in that extreme feudal darkness, *penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos.* If we believe the legend,—a form of history as true and as false as any other,—it is owing to poetry that Colgrim, besieged by the Britons, is relieved in York by his brother Bardulph the Saxon; that King Awlof penetrates into the camp of Athelstan; that Werburgh, prince of Northumbria, is delivered by the Welsh, whence, it is said, that Celtic device of the Prince of Wales, *Ich dien*; that Alfred, King of England, triumphs over Gitro, King of the Danes; and that Richard the Lion-hearted escapes from the prison of Losenstein. Ranulph, Earl of Chester, attacked in his castle of Rothelan, is saved by the intervention of the minstrels, which was still authenticated under Elizabeth by the privilege accorded to the minstrels patronized by the Lords of Dalton.

The poet had the right of reprimand and menace. In 1316, on Pentecost Day, Edward II. being at table in the grand hall of Westminster with the peers of England, a female minstrel entered the hall on horseback, rode all round, saluted Edward II., predicted in a loud voice to the minion Spencer the gibbet and castration by the hand of the executioner, and to the king the hoof by means of which a red-hot iron should be buried in his intestines, placed on the table before the king a letter, and departed; and no one said anything to her.

At the festivals the minstrels passed before the priests, and were more honourably treated. At Abingdon, at a festival of the Holy Cross, each of the twelve priests received fourpence, and each of the twelve minstrels two shillings. At the priory of Maxtoke, the custom was to give supper to the minstrels in the Painted Chamber, lighted by eight huge wax-candles.

The more we advance North, it seems as if the increased thickness of the fog increases the greatness of the poet. In Scotland he is enormous. If anything surpasses the legend of the Rhapsodists, it is the legend of the Scalds. At the

**approach of Edward of England, the bards defend Stirling as the three hundred had defended Sparta; and they have their Thermopylæ, as great as that of Leonidas. Ossian, perfectly certain and real, has had a plagiary; that is nothing; but this plagiarist has done more than rob him,—he has made him insipid. To know Fingal only by Macpherson is as if one knew Amadis only by Tressan. They show at Staffa the stone of the poet, *Clachan an Bairdh*,—so named, according to many antiquaries, long before the visit of Walter Scott to the Hebrides. This chair of the Bard—a great hollow rock ready for a giant wishing to sit down—is at the entrance of the grotto. Around it are the waves and the clouds. Behind the Clachan an Bairdh is heaped up and raised the superhuman geometry of basaltic prisms, the pell-mell of colonnades and waves, and all the mystery of the fearful edifice. The gallery of Fingal runs next to the poet's chair; the sea beats on it before entering under that terrible ceiling. When evening comes, one imagines that he sees in that chair a form leaning on its elbow. "It is the ghost!" say the fishermen of Mackinnon's clan; and no one would dare, even in full day, to go up as far as that formidable seat; for to the idea of the stone is allied the idea of the sepulchre, and on the chair of granite no one can be seated but the man of shade.**

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**CHAPTER IV.**

**Thought is power.**

**All power is duty. Should this power enter into repose in our age? Should duty shut its eyes? and is the moment come for art to disarm? Less than ever. The human caravan is, thanks to 1789, arrived on a high plateau; and the horizon being more vast, art has more to do. This is all. To every widening of horizon corresponds an enlargement of conscience.**

**We have not reached the goal. Concord condensed in happiness, civilization summed up in harmony,—that is far off yet. In the eighteenth century that dream was so distant that it seemed a guilty thought. The Abbé de St. Pierre was expelled from the Academy for having dreamed that dream,—an expulsion which seems rather severe at a period when pastorals carried the day, even with Fontenelle, and when St. Lambert invented the idyll for the use of the nobility. The Abbé de St. Pierre has left behind him a word and a dream: the word is his own,—"Benevolence;" the dream belongs to all of us,—"Fraternity." This dream, which made Cardinal de Polignac foam and Voltaire smile, is not now so much lost as it was once in the mist of the improbable. It is a little nearer; but we do not touch it.**

**The people, those orphans who seek their mother, do not yet hold in their hand the hem of the robe of peace.**

**There remains around us a sufficient quantity of slavery, of sophistry, of war and death, to prevent the spirit of civilization from giving up any of its forces. The idea of the right divine is not yet entirely done away with. That which has been Ferdinand VII. in Spain, Ferdinand II. in Naples, George IV. in England, Nicholas in Russia, still floats about; a remnant of these spectres is still hovering in the air. Inspirations descend from that fatal cloud on some crown-bearers who, leaning on their elbows, meditate with a sinister aspect.**

**Civilization has not done yet with those who grant constitutions, with the owners of peoples, and with the legitimate and hereditary madmen, who assert themselves majesties by the grace of God, and think that they have the right of manumission over the human race. It is necessary to raise some obstacle, to show bad will to the past, and to bring to bear on these men, on these dogmas, on these chimeras which stand in the way, some hindrance. Intellect, thought, science, true art, philosophy, ought to watch and beware of misunderstandings. False rights contrive very easily to put in movement true armies. There are murdered Polands looming in the future. "All my anxiety," said a contemporary poet recently dead, "is the smoke of my cigar." My anxiety is also a smoke,—the smoke of the cities which are burning in the distance. Therefore, let us bring the masters to grief, if we can.**

**Let us go again in the loudest possible voice over the lesson of the just and the unjust, of right and usurpation, of oath and perjury, of good and evil, of *fas et nefas*; let us come forth with all our old antitheses, as they say. Let us contrast what ought to be with what actually is. Let us put clearness into everything. Bring light, you that have it. Let us oppose dogma to dogma, principle to principle, energy to obstinacy, truth to imposture, dream to dream,—the dream of the future to the dream of the past,—liberty to despotism. People will be able to sit down, to stretch themselves at full length, and to go on smoking the cigar of fancy poetry, and to enjoy Boccaccio's "Decameron" with the sweet blue sky over their heads, whenever the sovereignty of a king shall be exactly of the same dimension as the liberty of a man. Until then, little sleep. I am distrustful.**

**Put sentinels everywhere. Do not expect from despots a large share of liberty. Break your own shackles, all of you Polands that may be! Make sure of the future by your own exertions. Do not hope that your chain will forge itself into the key of freedom. Up, children of the fatherland! O mowers of the steppes, arise! Trust to**

**the good intentions of orthodox czars just enough to take up arms. Hypocrisies and apologies, being traps, are one more danger.**

**We live in a time when orations are heard praising the magnanimity of white bears and the tender feelings of panthers. Amnesty, clemency, grandeur of soul; an era of felicity opens; fatherly love is the order of the day; see all that is already done; it must not be thought that the march of the age is not understood; august arms are open; rally still closer round the emperor; Muscovy is kind-hearted. See how happy the serfs are! The streams are to flow with milk, with prosperity and liberty for all. Your princes groan like you over the past; they are excellent. Come, fear nothing, little ones! so far as we are concerned, we confess candidly that we are of those who put no reliance in the lachrymal gland of crocodiles.**

**The actual public monstrosities impose stem obligations on the conscience of the thinker, philosopher, or poet. Incorruptibility must resist corruption. It is more than ever necessary to show men the ideal,—that mirror in which is seen the face of God.**

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## CHAPTER V.

**There are in literature and philosophy men who have tears and laughter at command,—Heraclituses wearing the mask of a Democritus; men often very great, like Voltaire. They are irony keeping a serious, sometimes tragic countenance.**

**These men, under the pressure of the influences and prejudices of their time, speak with a double meaning. One of the most profound is Bayle,[1] the man of Rotterdam, the powerful thinker. When Bayle coolly utters this maxim, "It is better worth our while to weaken the grace of a thought than to anger a tyrant," I smile; I know the man. I think of the persecuted, almost proscribed one, and I know well that he has given way to the temptation of affirming merely to give me the longing to contest. But when it is a poet who speaks,—a poet wholly free, rich, happy, prosperous almost to inviolability,—one expects a clear, open, and healthy teaching, one cannot believe that from such a man can emanate anything like a desertion of his own conscience; and it is with a blush that one reads this:—**

**"Here below, in time of peace, let every man sweep his own street-door. In war, if conquered, let every man fraternize with the soldiery.... Let every enthusiast be put on the cross when he reaches his thirtieth year. If he has once experienced the world as it is, from the dupe he becomes the rogue.... What utility, what**

**result, what advantage does the holy liberty of the press offer you? The complete demonstration of it is this: a profound contempt of public opinion.... There are people who have a mania for railing at everything that is great,—they are the men who have attacked the Holy Alliance; and yet nothing has been invented more august and more salutary for humanity."**

**These things, which lower the man who has written them, are signed *Goethe*. Goethe, when he wrote them, was sixty years old. Indifference to good and evil excites the brain,—one may get intoxicated with it; and that is what comes of it. The lesson is a sad one. Mournful sight! Here the helot is a mind.**

**A quotation may be a pillory. We nail on the public highway these lugubrious sentences; it is our duty. Goethe has written that. Let it be remembered; and let no one among the poets fall again into the same error.**

**To go into a passion for the good, for the true, for the just; to suffer with the sufferers; to feel in our inner soul all the blows struck by every executioner on human flesh; to be scourged with Christ and flogged with the negro; to be strengthened and to lament; to climb, a Titan, that wild peak where Peter and Cæsar make their swords fraternize, *gladium cum gladio copulemus*; to heap up for that escalade the Ossa of the ideal on the Pelion of the real; to make a vast repartition of hope; to avail one's self of the ubiquity of the book in order to be everywhere at the same time with a comforting thought; to push pell-mell men, women, children, whites, blacks, peoples, hangmen, tyrants, victims, impostors, the ignorant, proletaries, serfs, slaves, masters, toward the future (a precipice to some, deliverance to others); to go forth, to wake up, to hasten, to march, to run, to think, to wish,—ah, indeed, that is well! It is worth while being a poet. Beware! you lose your temper. Of course I do; but I gain anger. Come and breathe into my wings, hurricane!**

**There has been, of late years, an instant when impassibility was recommended to poets as a condition of divinity. To be indifferent, that was called being Olympian. Where had they seen that? That is an Olympus very unlike the real one. Read Homer. The Olympians are passion, and nothing else. Boundless humanity,—such is their divinity. They fight unceasingly. One has a bow, another a lance, another a sword, another a club, another thunder. There is one of them who compels the leopards to draw him along. Another, Wisdom, has cut off the head of Night, twisted with serpents, and has nailed it to his shield. Such is the calm of the Olympians. Their angers cause the thunders to roll from one end to the other of the Iliad and of the Odyssey.**

**These angers, when they are just, are good. The poet who has them is the true Olympian. Juvenal, Dante, Agrippa d'Aubigné, and Milton had these angers; Molière also. From the soul of Alcestes flashes constantly the lightning of "vigorous hatreds." Jesus meant that hatred of evil when he said, "I am come to bring war."**

**I like Stesichorus indignant, preventing the alliance of Greece with Phalaris, and fighting the brazen bull with strokes of the lyre.**

**Louis XIV. found it good to have Racine sleeping in his chamber when he, the king, was ill, turning thus the poet into an assistant to his apothecary,—wonderful patronage of letters; but he asked nothing more from the *beaux esprits*, and the horizon of his alcove seemed to him sufficient for them. One day, Racine, somewhat urged by Madame de Maintenon, had the idea to leave the king's chamber and to visit the garrets of the people. Thence a memoir on the public distress. Louis XIV. cast at Racine a killing look. Poets fare ill when, being courtiers, they do what royal mistresses ask of them. Racine, on the suggestion of Madame de Maintenon, risks a remonstrance which causes him to be driven from Court, and he dies of it. Voltaire at the instigation of Madame de Pompadour, tries a madrigal (an awkward one it appears), which causes him to be driven from France; and he does not die of it Louis XV. on reading the madrigal,—"Et gardez tous deux vos conquêtes,"—had exclaimed, "What a fool this Voltaire is!"**

**Some years ago, "a well-authorized pen," as they say in official and academic *patois*, wrote this:—**

**"The greatest service that poets can render us is to be good for nothing. We do not ask of them anything else."**

**Observe the extent and spread of this word, "the poets," which includes Linus, Musæus, Orpheus, Homer, Job, Hesiod, Moses, Daniel, Amos, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Æsop, David, Solomon, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Pindar, Archilochus, Tyrtæus, Stesichorus, Menander, Plato, Asclepiades, Pythagoras, Anacreon, Theocritus, Lucretius, Plautus, Terence, Virgil, Horace, Catullus, Juvenal, Apuleius, Lucan, Persius, Tibullus, Seneca, Petrarch, Ossian, Saädi, Ferdousi, Dante, Cervantes, Calderon, Lope de Vega, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Camoëns, Marot, Ronsard, Régnier, Agrippa d'Aubigné, Malherbe, Segrais, Racan, Milton, Pierre Corneille, Molière, Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine, Fontenelle, Reguard, Lesage, Swift, Voltaire, Diderot, Beaumarchais, Sedaine, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, André Chénier, Klopstock, Lessing, Wieland, Schiller, Goethe, Hoffmann, Alfieri, Châteaubriand, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, Burns, Walter**

**Scott, Balzac, Musset, Béranger, Pellico, Vigny, Dumas, George Sand, Lamartine,—all declared by the oracle "good for nothing," and having uselessness for excellence. That sentence (a "success," it appears) has been very often repeated. We repeat it in our turn. When the conceit of an idiot reaches such proportions it deserves registering. The writer who has emitted that aphorism is, so they assure us, one of the high personages of the day. We have no objection. Dignities do not lessen the length of the ears.**

**Octavius Augustus, on the morning of the battle of Actium, met an ass that the owner called Triumphus. This Triumphus, endowed with the faculty of braying, appeared to him of good omen; Octavius Augustus won the battle, remembered Triumphus, had the ass carved in bronze and placed in the Capitol. That made a Capitoline ass, but still an ass.**

**One can understand kings saying to the poet, "Be useless;" but one does not understand the people saying so to him. The poet is for the people. "Pro populo poëta," wrote Agrippa d'Aubigné; "All things to all men," exclaimed Saint Paul. What is a mind? A feeder of souls. The poet is at the same time a menace and a promise. The anxiety with which he inspires oppressors calms and consoles the oppressed. It is the glory of the poet that he places a restless pillow on the purple bed of the tormentors; and, thanks to him, it is often that the tyrant awakes, saying, "I have slept badly." Every slavery, every disheartening faintness, every sorrow, every misfortune, every distress, every hunger, and every thirst have a claim on the poet; he has one creditor,—the human race.**

**To be the great servant does not certainly derogate from the poet. Because on certain occasions, and to do his duty, he has uttered the cry of a people; because he has, when necessary, the sob of humanity in his breast,—every voice of mystery sings not the less in him. Speaking so loudly does not prevent him speaking low. He is not less the confidant, and sometimes the confessor, of hearts. He is not less intimately connected with those who love, with those who think, with those who sigh, thrusting his head in the twilight between the heads of two lovers. The love poems of André Chénier, without losing any of their characteristics, border on the angry iambic: "Weep thou, O Virtue, if I die!" The poet is the only living being to whom it is granted both to thunder and to whisper, because he has in himself, like Nature, the rumbling of the cloud and the rustling of the leaf. He exists for a double function,—a function individual and a public function: and it is for that that he requires, so to speak, two souls.**

**Ennius said: "I have three of them,—an Oscan soul, a Greek soul, and a Latin soul." It is true that he made allusion only to the place of his birth, to the place of his education, and to the place where he was a citizen; and besides, Ennius was but a rough cast of a poet, vast, but unformed.**

**No poet without that activity of soul which is the resultant of conscience. The ancient moral laws require to be stated; the new moral laws require to be revealed. These two series do not coincide without some effort. That effort is incumbent on the poet He assumes constantly the function of the philosopher. He must defend, according to the side attacked, now the liberty of the human mind, now the liberty of the human heart,—to love being no less holy than to think. There is nothing of "Art for art" in all that.**

**The poet arrives in the midst of those goers and comers that we call the living, in order to tame, like ancient Orpheus, the tiger in man,—his evil instincts,—and, like the legendary Amphion, to remove the stumbling-blocks of prejudice and superstition, to set up the new blocks, to relay the corner-stones and the foundations, and to build up again the city,—that is to say, society.**

**That this immense service—namely, to co-operate in the work of civilization—should involve loss of beauty for poetry and of dignity for the poet, is a proposition which one cannot enunciate without smiling. Useful art preserves and augments all its graces, all its charms, all its prestige. Indeed, because he has taken part with Prometheus,—the man progress, crucified on the Caucasus by brutal force, and gnawed at while alive by hatred,—Æschylus is not lowered. Because he has loosened the ligatures of idolatry; because he has freed human thought from the bands of religions tied over it (*arctis nodis relligionum*), Lucretius is not diminished. The branding of tyrants with the red-hot iron of prophecy does not lessen Isaiah; the defence of his country does not taint Tyrtæus. The beautiful is not degraded by having served liberty and the amelioration of human multitudes. The phrase "a people enfranchised" is not a bad end to a strophe. No, patriotic or revolutionary usefulness robs poetry of nothing. Because the huge Grütli has screened under its cliffs that formidable oath of three peasants from which sprang free Switzerland, it is all the same, in the falling night, a lofty mass of serene shade alive with herds, where are heard innumerable invisible bells tinkling gently under the clear twilight sky.**

**[1]Do not write *Beyle*.**

## PART III.—BOOK I.

## CONCLUSION.

## AFTER DEATH.—SHAKESPEARE.—ENGLAND.

### CHAPTER I

**In 1784, Bonaparte, then fifteen years old, arrived at the Military School of Paris from Brienne, being one among four under the escort of a minim priest. He mounted one hundred and seventy-three steps, carrying his small trunk, and reached, below the roof, the barrack chamber he was to inhabit. This chamber had two beds, and a small window opening on the great yard of the school. The wall was whitewashed; the youthful predecessors of Bonaparte had scrawled upon this with charcoal, and the new-comer read in this little cell these four inscriptions that we ourselves read thirty-five years ago:—**

**It takes rather long to win an epaulet.—*De Montgivray*.**

**The finest day in life is that of a battle.—*Vicomte de Tinténiac*.**

**Life is but a long falsehood.—*Le Chevalier Adolphe Delmas*.**

**All ends under six feet of earth.-*Le Comte de la Villette*.**

**By substituting for "an epaulet" "an empire,"—a very slight change,—the above four inscriptions were all the destiny of Bonaparte, and a kind of "Mene Tekel Upharsin" written beforehand upon that wall. Desmazis, junior, who accompanied Bonaparte, being his room-mate, and about to occupy one of the two beds, saw him take a pencil (it is Desmazis who has related the fact) and draw beneath the inscriptions that he had just read a rough sketch of his house at Ajaccio; then, by the side of that house, without suspecting that he was thus bringing near the island of Corsica another mysterious island then hid in the deep future, he wrote the last of the four sentences: "All ends under six feet of earth."**

**Bonaparte was right. For the hero, for the soldier, for the man of the material fact, all ends under six feet of earth; for the man of the idea everything commences there.**

**Death is a power.**

**For him who has had no other action but that of the mind, the tomb is the elimination of the obstacle. To be dead, is to be all-powerful.**

**The man of war is formidable while alive; he stands erect, the earth is silent, *siluit*; he has extermination in his gesture; millions of haggard men rush to follow him,—a fierce horde, sometimes a ruffianly one; it is no longer a human head, it is a conqueror, it is a captain, it is a king of kings, it is an emperor, it is a dazzling crown of laurels which passes, throwing out lightning flashes, and allowing to be seen in starlight beneath it a vague profile of Cæsar. All this vision is splendid and impressive; but let only a gravel come in the liver, or an excoriation to the pylorus,—six feet of ground, and all is said. This solar spectrum vanishes. This tumultuous life falls into a hole; the human race pursues its way, leaving behind this nothingness. If this man hurricane has made some lucky rupture, like Alexander in India, Charlemagne in Scandinavia, and Bonaparte in ancient Europe, that is all that remains of him. But let some passer-by, who has in him the ideal, let a poor wretch like Homer throw out a word in the darkness, and die,—that word burns up in the gloom and becomes a star.**

**This vanquished one, driven from one town to another, is called Dante Alighieri,—take care! This exiled one is called Æschylus, this prisoner is called Ezekiel,—beware! This one-handed man is winged,—it is Michael Cervantes. Do you know whom you see wayfaring there before you? It is a sick man, Tyrtæus; it is a slave, Plautus; it is a labourer, Spinoza; it is a valet, Rousseau. Well, that degradation, that labour, that servitude, that infirmity, is power,—the supreme power, mind.**

**On the dunghill like Job, under the stick like Epictetus, under contempt like Molière, mind remains mind. This it is that shall say the last word. The Caliph Almanzor makes the people spit on Averroes at the door of the mosque of Cordova; the Duke of York spits in person on Milton; a Rohan, almost a prince,—"duc ne daigne, Rohan suis,"—attempts to cudgel Voltaire to death; Descartes is driven from France in the name of Aristotle; Tasso pays for a kiss given a princess twenty years spent in a cell; Louis XV. sends Diderot to Vincennes; these are mere incidents; must there not be some clouds? Those appearances that were taken for realities, those princes, those kings melt away; there remains only what should remain,—the human mind on the one side, the divine minds on the other; the true work and the true workers; society to be perfected and made fruitful; science seeking the true; art creating the beautiful; the thirst of thought, torment and happiness of man; inferior life aspiring to superior life. Men have to deal with real questions,—with progress in intelligence and by intelligence. Men call to their aid the poets, prophets, philosophers, thinkers, the inspired. It is seen that philosophy is a nourishment and poetry a want. There must be another bread besides bread. If you give up poets, you must give up civilization. There comes an**

**hour when the human race is compelled to reckon with Shakespeare the actor and Isaiah the beggar.**

**They are the more present that they are no longer seen. Once dead, these beings live.**

**What life did they lead? What kind of men were they? What do we know of them? Sometimes but little, as of Shakespeare; often nothing, as of those of ancient days. Has Job existed? Is Homer one, or several? Méziriac made Æsop straight, and Planudes made him a hunchback. Is it true that the prophet Hosea, in order to show his love for his country, even when fallen into opprobrium and become infamous, espoused a prostitute, and called his children Mourning, Famine, Shame, Pestilence, and Misery? Is it true that Hesiod ought to be divided between Cumæ in Æolia, where he was born, and Ascra, in Bœotia, where he had been brought up? Velleius Paterculus makes him live one hundred and twenty years after Homer, of whom Quintilian makes him contemporary. Which of the two is right? What matters it? The poets are dead, their thought reigns. Having been, they are.**

**They do more work to-day among us than when they were alive. Others who have departed this life rest from their labours; dead men of genius work.**

**They work upon what? Upon minds. They make civilization.**

**"All ends under six feet of earth "? No; everything commences there. No; everything germinates there. No; everything flowers in it, and everything grows in it, and everything bursts forth from it, and everything proceeds from it! Good for you, men of the sword, are these maxims!**

**Lay yourselves down, disappear, lie in the grave, rot. So be it.**

**During life, gildings, caparisons, drums and trumpets, panoplies, banners to the wind, tumults, make up an illusion. The crowd gazes with admiration on these things. It imagines that it sees something grand. Who has the casque! Who has the cuirass? Who has the sword-belt? Who is spurred, morioned, plumed, armed? Hurrah for that one! At death the difference becomes striking. Juvenal takes Hannibal in the hollow of his hand.**

**It is not the Cæsar, it is the thinker, who can say when he expires, "Deus fio." So long as he remains a man his flesh interposes between other men and him. The flesh is a cloud upon genius. Death, that immense light, comes and penetrates the man with its aurora. No more flesh, no more matter, no more shade. The**

**unknown which was within him manifests itself and beams forth. In order that a mind may give all its light, it requires death. The dazzling of the human race commences when that which was a genius becomes a soul. A book within which there is something of the ghost is irresistible.**

**He who is living does not appear disinterested. People mistrust him; people dispute him because they jostle against him. To be alive, and to be a genius is too much. It goes and comes as you do, it walks on the earth, it has weight, it throws a shadow, it obstructs. It seems as if there was importunity in too great a presence. Men do not find that man sufficiently like themselves. As we have said already, they owe him a grudge. Who is this privileged one? This functionary cannot be dismissed. Persecution makes him greater; decapitation crowns him. Nothing can be done against him, nothing for him, nothing with him. He is responsible, but not to you. He has his instructions. What he executes may be discussed, not modified. It seems as though he had a commission to execute from some one who is not man. Such exception displeases. Hence more hissing than applause.**

**Dead, he no longer obstructs. The hiss, now useless, dies out. Living, he was a rival; dead, he is a benefactor. He becomes, according to the beautiful expression of Lebrun "l'homme irréparable." Lebrun observes this of Montesquieu; Boileau observes the same of Molière. "Avant qu'un peu de terre" etc. This handful of earth has equally aggrandized Voltaire. Voltaire, so great in the eighteenth century, is still greater in the nineteenth. The grave is a crucible. Its earth, thrown on a man, sifts his reputation, and allows it to pass forth purified. Voltaire has lost his false glory and retained the true. To lose the false is to gain. Voltaire is neither a lyric poet, nor a comic poet, nor a tragic poet: he is the indignant yet tender critic of the old world; he is the mild reformer of manners; he is the man who softens men. Voltaire, who has lost ground as a poet, has risen as an apostle. He has done what is good, rather than what is beautiful. The good being included in the beautiful, those who, like Dante and Shakespeare, have produced the beautiful, surpass Voltaire; but below the poet, the place of the philosopher, is still very high, and Voltaire is the philosopher. Voltaire is common-sense in a continual stream. Excepting in literature, he is a good judge in everything. Voltaire was, in spite of his insulters, almost adored during his lifetime; he is in our days admired, now that the true facts of the case are known. The eighteenth century saw his mind: we see his soul. Frederick II., who willingly railed at him, wrote to D'Alembert, "Voltaire buffoons. This century resembles the old courts. It has a fool, who is Arouet." This fool of the century was its sage.**

**Such are the effects of the tomb for great minds. That mysterious entrance into the unknown leaves light behind. Their disappearance is resplendent. Their death evolves authority.**

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## CHAPTER II.

**Shakespeare is the great glory of England. England has in politics Cromwell, in philosophy Bacon, in science Newton,—three lofty men of genius. But Cromwell is tinged with cruelty and Bacon with meanness; as to Newton, his edifice is now shaking on its base. Shakespeare is pure, which Cromwell and Bacon are not, and immovable, which Newton is not. Moreover, he is higher as a genius. Above Newton there is Copernicus and Galileo; above Bacon there is Descartes and Kant; above Cromwell there is Danton and Bonaparte; above Shakespeare there is no one. Shakespeare has equals, but not a superior. It is a singular honour for a land to have borne that man. One may say to that land, "Alma parens." The native town of Shakespeare is an elect place; an eternal light is on that cradle; Stratford-on-Avon has a certainty that Smyrna, Rhodes, Colophon, Salamis, Ohio, Argos, and Athens—the seven towns which disputed the birthplace of Homer—have not.**

**Shakespeare is a human mind; he is also an English mind. He is very English,—too English. He is English so far as to weaken the horror surrounding the horrible kings whom he places on the stage, when they are kings of England; so far as to depreciate Philip Augustus in comparison with John Lackland; so far as expressly to make a scapegoat, Falstaff, in order to load him with the princely misdeeds of the young Henry V.; so far as to partake in a certain measure of the hypocrisies of a pretended national history. Lastly, he is English so far as to attempt to attenuate Henry VIII.; it is true that the eye of Elizabeth is fixed upon him. But at the same time, let us insist upon this,—for it is by it that he is great,—yes, this English poet is a human genius. Art, like religion, has its *Ecce Homo*. Shakespeare is one of those of whom we may utter this grand saying: He is Man.**

**England is egotistical. Egotism is an island. That which perhaps is needed by this Albion immersed in her own business, and at times looked upon with little favour by other nations, is disinterested greatness; of this Shakespeare gives her some portion. He throws that purple on the shoulders of his country. He is cosmopolite and universal by his fame. On every side he overflows island and egotism. Deprive England of Shakespeare and see how much the luminous reverberation of that nation would immediately decrease. Shakespeare modifies the English**

**visage and makes it beautiful With him, England is no longer so much like Carthage.**

**Strange meaning of the apparition of men of genius! There is no great poet born in Sparta, no great poet born in Carthage. This condemns those two cities. Dig, and you shall find this: Sparta is but the city of logic; Carthage is but the city of matter; to one as to the other love is wanting. Carthage immolates her children by the sword, and Sparta sacrifices her virgins by nudity; here innocence is killed, and there modesty. Carthage knows only her bales and her cases; Sparta blends herself wholly with the law,—there is her true territory; it is for the laws that her men die at Thermopylæ. Carthage is hard. Sparta is cold. They are two republics based upon stone; therefore no books. The eternal sower, who is never mistaken, has not opened for those ungrateful lands his hand full of men of genius. Such wheat is not to be confided to the rock.**

**Heroism, however, is not refused to them; they will have, if necessary, either the martyr or the captain. Leonidas is possible for Sparta, Hannibal for Carthage; but neither Sparta nor Carthage is capable of Homer. Some indescribable tenderness in the sublime, which causes the poet to gush from the very entrails of a people, is wanting in them. That latent tenderness, that *flebile nescio quid*, England possesses; as a proof, Shakespeare. We may add also as a proof, Wilberforce.**

**England, mercantile like Carthage, legal like Sparta, is worth more than Sparta and Carthage. She is honoured by this august exception,—a poet. To have given birth to Shakespeare makes England great.**

**Shakespeare's place is among the most sublime in that *élite* of absolute men of genius which, from time to time increased by some splendid fresh arrival, crowns civilization and illumines with its immense radiancy the human race. Shakespeare is legion. Alone, he forms the counterpoise to our grand French seventeenth century, and almost to the eighteenth.**

**When one arrives in England, the first thing that he looks for is the statue of Shakespeare. He finds the statue of Wellington.**

**Wellington is a general who gained a battle, having chance for his partner.**

**If you insist on seeing Shakespeare's statue you are taken to a place called Westminster, where there are kings,—a crowd of kings: there is also a comer called "Poets' Corner." There, in the shade of four or five magnificent monuments where some royal nobodies shine in marble and bronze, is shown to you on a**

**small pedestal a little figure, and under this little figure, the name, "WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE."**

**In addition to this, statues everywhere; if you wish for statues you may find as many as you can wish. Statue for Charles, statue for Edward, statue for William, statues for three or four Georges, of whom one was an idiot. Statue of the Duke of Richmond at Huntley; statue of Napier at Portsmouth; statue of Father Mathew at Cork; statue of Herbert Ingram, I don't know where. A man has well drilled the riflemen,—he gets a statue; a man has commanded a manœuvre of the Horse Guards,—he gets a statue. Another has been a supporter of the past, has squandered all the wealth of England in paying a coalition of kings against 1789, against democracy, against light, against the ascending movement of the human race,—quick! a pedestal for that; a statue to Mr. Pitt. Another has knowingly fought against truth, in the hope that it might be vanquished, and has found out one fine morning that truth is hard-lived, that it is strong, that it might be intrusted with forming a cabinet, and has then passed abruptly over to its side,—one more pedestal; a statue for Mr. Peel. Everywhere, in every street, in every square, at every step, gigantic notes of admiration in the shape of columns,—a column to the Duke of York, which should really take the form of points of interrogation; a column to Nelson, pointed at by the ghost of Caracciolo; a column to Wellington, already named: columns for everybody. It is sufficient to have played with a sword somewhere. At Guernsey, by the seaside, on a promontory, there is a high column, similar to a lighthouse,—almost a tower; this one is struck by lightning; Æschylus would have contented himself with it. For whom is this?—for General Doyle. Who is General Doyle?—a general. What has this general done?—he has constructed roads. At his own expense?—no, at the expense of the inhabitants. He has a column. Nothing for Shakespeare, nothing for Milton, nothing for Newton; the name of Byron is obscure. That is where England is,—an illustrious and powerful nation.**

**It avails little that this nation has for scout and guide that generous British press, which is more than free,—which is sovereign,—and which through innumerable excellent journals throws light upon every question,—that is where England is; and let not France laugh too loudly, with her statue of Négrier; nor Belgium, with her statue of Belliard; nor Prussia, with her statue of Blücher; nor Austria, with the statue that she probably has of Schwartzenberg; nor Russia, with the statue that she certainly has of Souwaroff. If it is not Schwartzenberg, it is Windischgrätz; if it is not Souwaroff, it is Kutusoff.**

**Be Paskiewitch or Jellachich,—they will give you a statue; be Augereau or Bessières,—you get a statue; be an Arthur Wellesley, they will make you a colossus, and the ladies will dedicate you to yourself, quite naked, with this inscription: "Achilles." A young man, twenty years of age, performs the heroic action of marrying a beautiful young girl: they prepare for him triumphal arches; they come to see him out of curiosity; the grand-cordon is sent to him as on the morrow of a battle; the public squares are brilliant with fireworks; people who might have gray beards put on perukes to come and make speeches to him almost on their knees; they throw up in the air millions sterling in squibs and rockets to the applause of a multitude in tatters, who will have no bread to-morrow; starving Lancashire participates in the wedding; people are in ecstasies; they fire guns, they ring the bells,—"Rule Britannia!" "God save!" What! this young man has the kindness to do this? What a glory for the nation! Universal admiration,—a great people become frantic; a great city falls into a swoon; a balcony looking upon the passage of the young man is let for five hundred guineas; people heap themselves together, press upon one another, thrust one another beneath the wheels of his carriage; seven women are crushed to death in the enthusiasm, and their little children are picked up dead under the trampling feet; a hundred persons, partially stifled, are carried to the hospital: the joy is inexpressible. While this is going on in London, the cutting of the Isthmus of Panama is interrupted by a war; the cutting of the Isthmus of Suez depends on one Ismail Pacha; a company undertakes the sale of the water of Jordan at a guinea the bottle; walls are invented which resist every cannon-ball, after which missiles are invented which destroy every wall; an Armstrong cannon-shot costs fifty pounds; Byzantium contemplates Abdul-Azis; Rome goes to confession; the frogs, encouraged by the stork, demand a heron; Greece, after Otho, again wants a king; Mexico, after Iturbide, again wants an emperor; China wants two of them,—the king of the Centre, a Tartar, and the king of Heaven (Tien Wang), a Chinese. O earth! throne of stupidity.**

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## CHAPTER III.

**The glory of Shakespeare reached England from abroad. There was almost a day and an hour when one might have assisted at the landing of his fame at Dover.**

**It required three hundred years for England to begin to hear those two words that the whole world cries in her ear: "William Shakespeare."**

**What is England? She is Elizabeth. There is no incarnation more complete. In admiring Elizabeth, England loves her own looking-glass. Proud and magnanimous, yet full of strange hypocrisies; great, yet pedantic; haughty, albeit able; prudish, yet audacious; having favourites but no masters; her own mistress, even in her bed; all-powerful queen, inaccessible woman,—Elizabeth is a virgin as England is an island. Like England, she calls herself Empress of the Sea, *Basilea maris*. A fearful depth, in which are let loose the angry passions which behead Essex and the tempests which destroy the Armada, defends this virgin and defends this island from every approach. The ocean is the guardian of this modesty. A certain celibacy, in fact, constitutes all the genius of England. Alliances, be it so; no marriage. The universe always kept at some distance. To live alone, to go alone, to reign alone, to be alone,—such is Elizabeth, such is England.**

**On the whole, a remarkable queen and an admirable nation.**

**Shakespeare, on the contrary, is a sympathetic genius. Insularism is his ligature, not his strength. He would break it willingly. A little more and Shakespeare would be European. He loves and praises France; he calls her "the soldier of God." Besides, in that prudish nation he is the free poet.**

**England has two books: one which she has made, the other which has made her,—Shakespeare and the Bible. These two books do not agree together. The Bible opposes Shakespeare.**

**Certainly, as a literary book, the Bible, a vast cup from the East, more overflowing in poetry even than Shakespeare, might fraternize with him; in a social and religious point of view, it abhors him. Shakespeare thinks, Shakespeare dreams, Shakespeare doubts. There is in him something of that Montaigne whom he loved. The "to be or not to be" comes from the *que sais-je?***

**Moreover, Shakespeare invents. A great objection. Faith excommunicates imagination. In respect to fables, faith is a bad neighbour, and fondles only its own. One recollects Solon's staff raised against Thespis. One recollects the torch of Omar brandished over Alexandria. The situation is always the same. Modern fanaticism has inherited that staff and that torch. That is true in Spain, and is not false in England. I have heard an Anglican bishop discuss the Iliad and condense everything in this remark, with which he meant to annihilate Homer: "It is not true." Now, Shakespeare is much more a "liar" than Homer.**

Two or three years ago the journals announced that a French writer was about to sell a novel for four hundred thousand francs. This made quite a noise in England. A Conformist paper exclaimed, "How can a falsehood be sold at such a price?"

Besides, two words, all-powerful in England, range themselves against Shakespeare, and constitute an obstacle against him: "Improper, shocking." Observe that, on a host of occasions, the Bible also is "improper" and Holy Writ is "shocking." The Bible, even in French, and through the rough lips of Calvin, does not hesitate to say, "Tu as paillardé, Jerusalem." These crudities are part of poetry as well as of anger; and the prophets, those angry poets, do not abstain from them. Gross words are constantly on their lips. But England, where the Bible is continually read, does not seem to realize it. Nothing equals the power of voluntary deafness in fanatics. Would you have another example of their deafness? At this hour Roman orthodoxy has not yet admitted the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, although averred by the four Evangelists. Matthew, may say, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without.... And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas. And his sisters, are they not all with us?" Mark may insist: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?" Luke may repeat: "Then came to him his mother and his brethren." John may again take up the question: "He, and his mother, and his brethren.... Neither did his brethren believe in him.... But when his brethren were gone up." Catholicism does not hear.

To make up for it, in the case of Shakespeare, "somewhat of a Pagan, like all poets"[1] Puritanism has a delicate hearing. Intolerance and inconsequence are sisters. Besides, in the matter of proscribing and damning, logic is superfluous. When Shakespeare, by the mouth of Othello, calls Desdemona "whore," general indignation, unanimous revolt, scandal from top to bottom. Who then is this Shakespeare? All the biblical sects stop their ears, without thinking that Aaron addresses exactly the same epithet to Sephora, wife of Moses. It is true that this is in an Apocryphal work, "The Life of Moses." But the Apocryphal books are quite as authentic as the canonical ones.

Thence in England, for Shakespeare, a depth of irreducible coldness. What Elizabeth was for Shakespeare, England is still,—at least we fear so. We should be happy to be contradicted. We are more ambitious for the glory of England than England is herself. This cannot displease her.

**England has a strange institution,—"the poet laureate,"—which attests the official admiration and a little the national admiration. Under Elizabeth, England's poet was named Drummond.**

**Of course, we are no longer in the days when they placarded "Macbeth, opera of Shakespeare, altered by Sir William Davenant." But if "Macbeth" is played, it is before a small audience. Kean and Macready have tried and failed in the endeavour.**

**At this hour they would not play Shakespeare on any English stage without erasing from the text the word *God* wherever they find it. In the full tide of the nineteenth century, the lord-chamberlain still weighs heavily on Shakespeare. In England, outside the church, the word God is not made use of. In conversation they replace "God" by "Goodness." In the editions or in the representations of Shakespeare, "God" is replaced by "Heaven." The sense suffers, the verse limps; no matter. "Lord! Lord! Lord!" the last appeal of Desdemona expiring, was suppressed by command in the edition of Blount and Jaggard in 1623. They do not utter it on the stage. "Sweet Jesus!" would be a blasphemy; a devout Spanish woman on the English stage is bound to exclaim, "Sweet Jupiter!" Do we exaggerate? Would you have a proof? Let us open "Measure for Measure." There is a nun, Isabella. Whom does she invoke? Jupiter. Shakespeare had written "Jesus."[2]**

**The tone of a certain Puritanical criticism toward Shakespeare is, most certainly, improved; yet the cure is not complete.**

**It is not many years since an English economist, a man of authority, making, in the midst of social questions, a literary excursion, affirmed in a lofty digression, and without exhibiting the slightest diffidence, this:—**

**"Shakespeare cannot live because he has treated specially foreign or ancient subjects—'Hamlet,' 'Othello,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Macbeth,' 'Lear,' 'Julius Cæsar,' 'Coriolanus,' 'Timon of Athens,' etc. Now, nothing is likely to live in literature except matters of immediate observation and works made on contemporary subjects."**

**What say you to the theory? We would not mention it if this system had not met approvers in England and propagators in France. Besides Shakespeare, it simply excludes from literary "life" Schiller, Corneille, Milton, Virgil, Euripides, Sophocles, Æschylus, and Homer. It is true that it surrounds with a halo of glory**

**Aulus-Gellius and Restif of Bretonne. O critic, this Shakespeare is not likely to live, he is only immortal!**

**About the same time, another—English also, but of the Scotch school, a Puritan of that discontented variety of which Knox is the head—declared poetry childishness; repudiated beauty of style as an obstacle interposed between the idea and the reader; saw in Hamlet's soliloquy only "a cold lyricism," and in Othello's adieu to standards and camps only "a declamation;" likened the metaphors of poets to illustrations in books,—good for amusing babies; and showed a particular contempt for Shakespeare, as besmeared from one end to the other with that "illuminating process."**

**Not later than last January, a witty London paper,[3] with indignant irony, was asking which is the most celebrated, in England, Shakespeare or "Mr. Calcraft, the hangman:"—**

**"There are localities in this enlightened country where, if you pronounce the name of Shakespeare they will answer you: 'I don't know what this Shakespeare may be about whom you make all this fuss, but I will back Hammer Lane of Birmingham to fight him for five pounds.' But no mistake is made about Calcraft."**

**[1]Rev. John Wheeler.**

**[2]On the other hand, however, in spite of all the lords-chamberlain, it is difficult to beat the French censorship. Religions are diverse, but bigotry is one, and is the same in all its specimens. What we are about to write is an extract from the notes (on "Richard II." and "Henry IV.") added to his translation by the new translator of Shakespeare:—**

**"'Jesus! Jesus!' This exclamation of Shallow was expunged in the edition of 1623, conformably to the statute which forbade the uttering of the name of the Divinity on the stage. It is worthy of remark that our modern theatre has had to undergo, under the scissors of the censorship of the Bourbons, the same stupid mutilations to which the censorship of the Stuarts condemned the theatre of Shakespeare. I read what follows in the first page of the manuscript of 'Hernani,' which I have in my hands:—**

**'Received at the Théâtre-Français, Oct. 8, 1829.**
**'The Stage-manager,**
**'Albertin.'**

**"And lower down, in red ink:—**

**'On condition of expunging the name of "Jesus" wherever found, and conforming to the alterations marked at pages 27, 28, 29, 62, 74, and 76.**

**'The Secretary of State for the Department of the Interior,**
**'La Bourdonnate.'"**

**We may add that in the scenery representing Saragossa (second act of "Hernani") it was forbidden to put any belfry or any church, which made resemblance rather difficult, Saragossa having in the sixteenth century three hundred and nine churches and six hundred and seventeen convents.**

**[3]Daily Telegraph, 13 Jan., 1864.**

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## CHAPTER IV.

**At all events, Shakespeare has not the monument that England owes to Shakespeare.**

**France, let me admit, is not, in like cases, much more speedy. Another glory, very different from Shakespeare, but not less grand,—Joan of Arc,—waits also, and has waited longer for a national monument, a monument worthy of her.**

**This land which has been Gaul, and where the Velledas reigned, has, in a Catholic and historic sense, for patronesses two august figures,—Mary and Joan. The one, holy, is the Virgin; the other, heroic, is the Maid. Louis XIII. gave France to the one; the other has given France to France. The monument of the second should not be less high than the monument of the first Joan of Arc must have a trophy as grand as Notre-Dame. When shall she have it?**

**England has failed utterly to pay its debt to Shakespeare; but so also has France failed toward Joan of Arc.**

**These ingratitudes require to be sternly denounced. Doubtless the governing aristocracies, which blind the eyes of the masses, deserve the first accusation of guilt; but on the whole, conscience exists for a people as for an individual. Ignorance is only an attenuating circumstance; and when these denials of justice last for centuries, they remain the fault of governments, but become the fault of nations. Let us know, when necessary, how to tell nations of their shortcomings. France and England, you are wrong.**

**To flatter peoples would be worse than to flatter kings. The one is base, the other would be cowardly.**

**Let us go further, and since this thought has been presented to us, let us generalize it usefully, even if we should leave our subject for a while. No; the people have not the right to throw indefinitely the fault upon governments. The acceptation of oppression by the oppressed ends in becoming complicity. Cowardice is consent whenever the duration of a bad thing, which presses on the people, and which the people could prevent if they would, goes beyond the amount of patience endurable by an honest man; there is an appreciable solidarity and a partnership in shame between the government guilty of the evil and the people allowing it to be done. To suffer is worthy of veneration; to submit is worthy of contempt. Let us pass on.**

**A noteworthy coincidence: the man who denies Shakespeare, Voltaire, is also the insulter of Joan of Arc. But then what is Voltaire? Voltaire—we may say it with joy and sadness—is the French mind. Let us understand: it is the French mind, up to the Revolution exclusively. From the French Revolution, France increasing in greatness, the French mind grows larger, and tends to become the European mind; it is less local and more fraternal, less Gallic and more human. It represents more and more Paris, the city heart of the world. As for Voltaire, he remains as he is,—the man of the future, but also the man of the past. He is one of those glories which make the thinker say yes and no; he has against him two sarcasms, Joan of Arc and Shakespeare. He is punished through what he sneered at.**

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## CHAPTER V.

**In truth, a monument to Shakespeare, *cui bono?* The statue that he has made for himself is worth more, with all England for a pedestal. Shakespeare has no need of a pyramid; he has his work.**

**What do you suppose marble could do for him? What can bronze do where there is glory? Malachite and alabaster are of no avail; jasper, serpentine, basalt, red porphyry, such as that at the Invalides, granite, Paros and Carrara, are of no use,—genius is genius without them. Even if all the stones had a part in it, would they make that man an inch greater? What vault shall be more indestructible than this; "The Winter's Tale," "The Tempest," "The Merry Wives of Windsor," "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," "Julius Cæsar," "Coriolanus?" What monument more grandiose than "Lear," more wild than "The Merchant of Venice," more dazzling than "Romeo and Juliet," more amazing than "Richard III."? What moon could throw on that building a light more mysterious than "The Midsummer Night's**

**Dream"? What capital, were it even London, could produce around it a rumour so gigantic as the tumultuous soul of "Macbeth"? What framework of cedar or of oak will last as long as "Othello"? What bronze will be bronze as much as "Hamlet"? No construction of lime, of rock, of iron and of cement, is worth the breath,—the deep breath of genius, which is the breathing of God through man. A head in which is an idea,—such is the summit; heaps of stone and brick would be useless efforts. What edifice equals a thought? Babel is below Isaiah; Cheops is less than Homer; the Coliseum is inferior to Juvenal; the Giralda of Seville is dwarfish by the side of Cervantes; St. Peter of Rome does not reach to the ankle of Dante. How could you manage to build a tower as high as that name: Shakespeare.**

**Ah, add something, if you can, to a mind!**

**Suppose a monument. Suppose it splendid; suppose it sublime,—a triumphal arch, an obelisk, a circus with a pedestal in the centre, a cathedral. No people is more illustrious, more noble, more magnificent, and more magnanimous than the English people. Couple these two ideas, England and Shakespeare, and make an edifice arise therefrom. Such a nation celebrating such a man, it will be superb. Imagine the monument, imagine the inauguration. The Peers are there, the Commons give their adherence, the bishops officiate, the princes join the procession, the queen is present. The virtuous woman in whom the English people, royalist as we know, see and venerate their actual personification,—this worthy mother, this noble widow, comes, with the deep respect which is called for, to incline material majesty before ideal majesty; the Queen of England salutes Shakespeare. The homage of Victoria repairs the disdain of Elizabeth. As for Elizabeth, she is probably there also, sculptured somewhere on the surbase, with Henry VIII., her father, and James I., her successor,—pygmies beneath the poet. The cannon booms, the curtain falls, they uncover the statue, which seems to say, "At length!" and which has grown in the shade during three hundred years,—three centuries; the growth of a colossus; an immensity. All the York, Cumberland, Pitt, and Peel bronzes have been made use of, in order to produce this statue; the public places have been disencumbered of a heap of uncalled-for metal-castings; in this lofty figure have been amalgamated all kinds of Henrys and Edwards; the various Williams and the numerous Georges have been melted, the Achilles in Hyde Park has made the great-toe. This is fine; behold Shakespeare almost as great as a Pharaoh or a Sesostris. Bells, drums, trumpets, applause, hurrahs.**

**What then?**

**It is honourable for England, indifferent to Shakespeare.**

**What is the salutation of royalty, of aristocracy, of the army, and even of the English populace, ignorant yet to this moment, like nearly all other nations,—what is the salutation of all these groups variously enlightened to him who has the eternal acclamation, with its reverberation, of all ages and all men? What orison of the Bishop of London or of the Archbishop of Canterbury is worth the cry of a woman before Desdemona, of a mother before Arthur, of a soul before Hamlet?**

**And thus, when universal outcry demands from England a monument to Shakespeare, it is not for the sake of Shakespeare, it is for the sake of England.**

**There are cases in which the repayment of a debt is of greater import to the debtor than to the creditor.**

**A monument is an example. The lofty head of a great man is a light. Crowds, like the waves, require beacons above them. It is good that the passer-by should know that there are great men. People may not have time to read; they are forced to see. People pass by that way, and stumble against the pedestal; they are almost obliged to raise the head and to glance a little at the inscription. Men escape a book; they cannot escape the statue. One day on the bridge of Rouen, before the beautiful statue due to David d'Angers, a peasant mounted on an ass said to me: "Do you know Pierre Corneille?" "Yes," I replied. "So do I," he rejoined. "And do you know 'The Cid'?" I resumed. "No," said he.**

**To him, Corneille was the statue.**

**This beginning in the knowledge of great men is necessary to the people. The monument incites them to know more of the man. They desire to learn to read in order to know what this bronze means. A statue is an elbow-thrust to ignorance.**

**There is then, in the execution of such monuments, popular utility as well as national justice.**

**To perform what is useful at the same time as what is just, that will at the end certainly tempt England. She is the debtor of Shakespeare. To leave such a debt in abeyance is not a good attitude for the pride of a people. It is a point of morality that nations should be good payers in matters of gratitude. Enthusiasm is probity. When a man is a glory in the face of his nation, that nation which does not perceive the fact astounds the human race around.**

## CHAPTER VI.

**England, as it is easy to foresee, will build a monument to her poet.**

**At the very moment we finished writing the pages you have just read, was announced in London the formation of a committee for the solemn celebration of the three-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Shakespeare. This committee will dedicate to Shakespeare, on the 23d April, 1864, a monument and a festival which will surpass, we doubt not, the incomplete programme we have just sketched out. They will spare nothing. The act of admiration will be a striking one. One may expect everything, in point of magnificence, from the nation which has created the prodigious palace at Sydenham, that Versailles of a people. The initiative taken by the committee will doubtless secure the co-operation of the powers that be. We discard, for our part, and the committee will discard, we think, all idea of a manifestation by subscription. A subscription, unless of one penny,—that is to say, open to all the people,—is necessarily fractional. What is due to Shakespeare is a national manifestation;—a holiday, a public *fête*, a popular monument, voted by the Chambers and entered in the Budget England would do it for her king. Now, what is the King of England beside the man of England? Every confidence is due to the Jubilee Committee of Shakespeare,—a committee composed of persons highly distinguished in the press, the peerage, literature, the stage, and the church. Eminent men from all countries, representing intellect in France, in Germany, in Belgium, in Spain, in Italy, complete this committee, in all points of view excellent and competent. Another committee, formed at Stratford-on-Avon, seconds the London committee. We congratulate England.**

**Nations have a dull ear and a long life,—which latter makes their deafness by no means irreparable: they have time to change their mind. The English are awake at last to their glory. England begins to spell that name, Shakespeare, upon which the universe has laid her finger.**

**In April, 1664, a hundred years after Shakespeare was born, England was occupied in cheering loudly Charles II., who had sold Dunkirk to France for two hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling, and in looking at something that was a skeleton and had been Cromwell, whitening under the north-east wind and rain on the gallows at Tyburn. In April, 1764, two hundred years after Shakespeare was born, England was contemplating the dawn of George III.,—a king destined to imbecility,—who at that epoch, in secret councils, and in somewhat unconstitutional asides with the Tory chiefs and the German Landgraves, was**

**sketching out that policy of resistance to progress which was to strive, first against liberty in America, then against democracy in France, and which, during the single ministry of the first Pitt, had, in 1778, raised the debt of England to the sum of eighty millions sterling. In April, 1864, three hundred years since Shakespeare's birth, England raises a statue to Shakespeare. It is late, but it is well.**

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## BOOK II.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

### CHAPTER I.

**The nineteenth century springs from itself only; it does not receive its impulse from any ancestor; it is the offspring of an idea. Doubtless, Isaiah, Homer, Aristotle, Dante, Shakespeare, have been or could be great starting-points for important philosophical or poetical formations; but the nineteenth century has an august mother,—the French Revolution. It has that powerful blood in its veins. It honours men of genius. When denied it salutes them, when ignored it proclaims them, when persecuted it avenges them, when insulted it crowns them, when dethroned it replaces them upon their pedestal; it venerates them, but it does not proceed from them. The nineteenth century has for family itself, and itself alone. It is the characteristic of its revolutionary nature to dispense with ancestors.**

**Itself a genius, it fraternizes with men of genius. As for its source, it is where theirs is,—beyond man. The mysterious gestations of progress succeed each other according to a providential law. The nineteenth century is born of civilization. It has a continent to bring into the world. France has borne this century; and this century bears Europe.**

**The Greek stock bore civilization, narrow and circumscribed at first by the mulberry leaf, confined to the Morea; then civilization, gaining step by step, grew broader, and formed the Roman stock. It is to-day the French stock,—that is to say, all Europe,—with young shoots in America, Africa, and Asia.**

**The greatest of these young shoots is a democracy,—the United States, the sprouting of which was aided by France in the last century. France, sublime essayist in progress, has founded a republic in America before making one in Europe. *Et vidit quod esset bonum.* After having lent to Washington an auxiliary,**

**Lafayette, France, returning home, gave to Voltaire, dismayed within his tomb, that formidable successor, Danton. In presence of the monstrous past, hurling every thunder, exhaling every miasma, breathing every darkness, protruding every talon, horrible and terrible, progress, constrained to use the same weapons, has had suddenly a hundred arms, a hundred heads, a hundred tongues of fire, a hundred roarings. The good has transformed itself into a hydra. It is this that is termed the Revolution.**

**Nothing can be more august.**

**The Revolution ended one century and began another.**

**An intellectual awakening prepares the way for an overthrow of facts,—and this is the eighteenth century. After which the political revolution, once accomplished, seeks expression, and the literary and social revolution completes it: this is the nineteenth century. With ill-will, but not unjustly, has it been said that romanticism and socialism are identical: hatred, in its desire to injure, very often establishes, and, so far as is in its power, consolidates.**

**A parenthesis. This word, romanticism, has, like all war-cries, the advantage of readily summing up a group of ideas. It is brief,—which pleases in the contest; but it has, to our idea, through its militant signification, the objection of appearing to limit the movement that it represents to a warlike action. Now, this movement is a matter of intellect, a matter of civilization, a matter of soul; and this is why the writer of these lines has never used the words *romanticism* or *romantic*. They will not be found in any of the pages of criticism that he has had occasion to write. If to-day he derogates from his usual prudence in polemics, it is for the sake of greater rapidity and with all reservation. The same observation may be made on the subject of the word *socialism*, which admits of so many different interpretations.**

**The triple movement—literary, philosophical, and social—of the nineteenth century, which is one single movement, is nothing but the current of the revolution in ideas. This current, after having swept away facts, is perpetuated in minds with all its immensity.**

**This term, "literary '93," so often quoted in 1830 against contemporaneous literature, was not so much an insult as it was intended to be. It was certainly as unjust to employ it as characterizing the whole literary movement as it is iniquitous to employ it to describe all the political revolutions; there is in these two phenomena something besides '93. But this term, "literary '93," was relatively**

**exact, insomuch as it indicated, confusedly but truthfully, the origin of the literary movement which belongs to our epoch, while endeavouring to dishonour that movement. Here again the clairvoyance of hatred was blind. Its daubings of mud upon the face of truth are gilding, light, and glory.**

**The Revolution, turning climacteric of humanity, is made up of several years. Each of these years expresses a period, represents an aspect, or realizes a phase of the phenomenon. Tragic '93 is one of those colossal years. Good news must sometimes have a mouth of bronze. Such a mouth is '93.**

**Listen to the immense proclamation proceeding from it. Give attention, remain speechless, and be impressed. God himself said the first time *Fiat lux*, the second time he has caused it to be said.**

**By whom?**

**By '93.**

**Therefore, we men of the nineteenth century hold in honour that reproach, "You are '93."**

**But do not stop there. We are '89 as well as '93. The Revolution, the whole Revolution,—such is the source of the literature of the nineteenth century.**

**On these grounds put it on its trial, this literature, or seek its triumph; hate it or love it. According to the amount of the future that you have in you, outrage it or salute it; little do animosities and fury affect it. It is the logical deduction from the great chaotic and genesiacal fact that our fathers have witnessed, and which has given a new starting-point to the world. He who is against that fact is against that literature; he who is for that fact is on its side. What the fact is worth the literature is worth. The reactionary writers are not mistaken; wherever there is revolution, patent or latent, the Catholic and royalist scent is unfailing. Those men of letters of the past award to contemporaneous literature an honourable amount of diatribe; their aversion is convulsive. One of their journalists, who is, I believe a bishop, pronounces this word *poet* with the same accent as the word *Septembrist*; another, less of a bishop, but quite as angry, writes, "I feel in all this literature Marat and Robespierre." This last writer is rather mistaken; there is in "this literature" Danton rather than Marat.**

**But the fact is true: democracy is in this literature.**

**The Revolution has forged the clarion; the nineteenth century sounds it.**

**Ah, this affirmation suits us, and, in truth, we do not recoil before it; we avow our glory,—we are revolutionists. The thinkers of the present time,—poets, writers, historians, orators, philosophers,—all are derived from the French Revolution. They come from it, and it alone. It was '89 that demolished the Bastille; it was '93 that took the crown from the Louvre. From '89 sprung Deliverance, and from '93 Victory. From '89 and '93 the men of the nineteenth century proceed: these are their father and their mother. Do not seek for them another affiliation, another inspiration, another insufflation, another origin. They are the democrats of the idea, successors to the democrats of action. They are the emancipators. Liberty bent over their cradles,—they all have sucked her vast breast; they all have her milk in their entrails, her marrow in their bones, her sap in their will, her spirit of revolt in their reason, her flame in their intellect.**

**Even those among them (there are some) who were born aristocrats, who came to the world banished in some degree among families of the past, who have fatally received one of those primary educations whose stupid effort is to contradict progress, and who have commenced the words that they had to say to our century with an indescribable royalist stuttering,—these, from that period, from their infancy (they will not contradict me), felt the sublime monster within them. They had the inner ebullition of the immense fact. They had in the depth of their conscience a whispering of mysterious ideas; the inward shock of false certainties troubled their mind; they felt their sombre surface of monarchism, Catholicism, and aristocracy tremble, shudder, and by degrees split up. One day, suddenly and powerfully, the swelling of truth within them prevailed, the hatching was completed, the eruption took place; the light flamed in them, causing them to burst open,—not falling on them, but (more beautiful mystery!) gushing out of these amazed men, enlightening them, while it burned within them. They were craters unknown to themselves.**

**This phenomenon has been interpreted to their reproach as a treason. They passed over, in fact, from right divine to human right. They turned their back on false history, on false tradition, on false dogmas, on false philosophy, on false daylight, on false truth. The free spirit which soars up,—bird called by Aurora,—offends intellects saturated with ignorance and the fœtus preserved in spirits of wine. He who sees offends the blind; he who hears makes the deaf indignant; he who walks offers an abominable insult to cripples. In the eyes of dwarfs, abortions, Aztecs, myrmidons, and pygmies, forever subject to rickets, growth is apostasy.**

**The writers and poets of the nineteenth century have the admirable good fortune of proceeding from a genesis, of arriving after an end of the world, of accompanying a reappearance of light, of being the organs of a new beginning. This imposes on them duties unknown to their predecessors—the duties of intentional reformers and direct civilizers. They continue nothing; they remake everything. For new times, new duties. The function of thinkers in our days is complex; to think is no longer sufficient,—they must love; to think and love is no longer sufficient,—they must act; to think, to love, and to act, no longer suffices,—they must suffer. Lay down the pen, and go where you hear the grapeshot. Here is a barricade; be one on it. Here is exile; accept it. Here is the scaffold; be it so. Let John Brown be in Montesquieu, if needful. The Lucretius required by this century in labour should contain Cato. Æschylus, who wrote the "Orestias" had for a brother Cynegyrus, who fastened with his teeth on the ships of the enemies: that was sufficient for Greece at the time of Salamis, but it no longer suffices for France after the Revolution. That Æschylus and Cynegyrus are brothers is not enough; they must be the same man. Such are the actual requirements of progress. Those who devote themselves to great and pressing things can never be too great. To set ideas in motion, to heap up evidence, to pile up principles, that is the redoubtable movement. To heap Pelion on Ossa is the labour of infants beside that work of giants, the placing of right upon truth. To scale that afterward, and to dethrone usurpations in the midst of thunders,—such is the work.**

**The future presses. To-morrow cannot wait. Humanity has not a minute to lose. Quick! quick! let us hasten; the wretched ones have their feet on red-hot iron. They hunger, they thirst, they suffer. Ah, terrible emaciation of the poor human body! Parasitism laughs, the ivy grows green and thrives, the mistletoe is flourishing, the tapeworm is happy. What a frightful object the prosperity of the tapeworm! To destroy that which devours,—in that is safety. Your life has within itself death, which is in good health. There is too much misery, too much desolation, too much immodesty, too much nakedness, too many brothels, too many prisons, too many rags, too many crimes, too much weakness, too much darkness, not enough schools, too many little innocents growing up for evil! The truckle-beds of poor girls are suddenly covered with silk and lace,—and in that is worse misery; by the side of misfortune there is vice, the one urging the other. Such a society requires prompt succour. Let us seek for the best. Go all of you in this search. Where are the promised lands? Civilization would go forward; let us try theories, systems, ameliorations, inventions, progress, until the shoe for that**

**foot shall be found. The attempt costs nothing, or costs but little,—to attempt is not to adopt,—but before all, above all, let us be lavish of light. All sanitary purification begins in opening windows wide. Let us open wide all intellects. Let us supply souls with air.**

**Quick, quick, O thinkers! Let the human race breathe; give hope, give the ideal, do good. Let one step succeed another, horizon expand into horizon, conquest follow conquest. Because you have given what you promised do not think you have performed all that is required of you. To possess is to promise; the dawn of to-day imposes on the sun obligations for to-morrow.**

**Let nothing be lost. Let not one strength be isolated. Every one to work! there is vast urgency for it. No more idle art. Poetry the worker of civilization, what more admirable? The dreamer should be a pioneer; the strophe should mean something. The beautiful should be at the service of honesty. I am the valet of my conscience; it rings for me: I come. "Go!" I go. What do you require of me, O truth, sole majesty of this world? Let each one feel in haste to do well. A book is sometimes a source of hoped-for succour. An idea is a balm, a word may be a dressing for wounds; poetry is a physician. Let no one tarry. Suffering is losing its strength while you are idling. Let men leave this dreamy laziness. Leave the kief to the Turks. Let men labour for the safety of all, and let them rush into it and be out of breath. Do not be sparing of your strides. Nothing useless; no inertia. What do you call dead nature? Everything lives. The duty of all is to live; to walk, to run, to fly, to soar, is the universal law. What do you wait for? Who stops you? Ah, there are times when one might wish to hear the stones murmur at the slowness of man!**

**Sometimes one goes into the woods. To whom does it not happen at times to be overwhelmed?—one sees so many sad things. The stage is a long one to go over, the consequences are long in coming, a generation is behindhand, the work of the age languishes. What! so many sufferings yet? One might think he has gone backward. There is everywhere increase of superstition, of cowardice, of deafness, of blindness, of imbecility. Penal laws weigh upon brutishness. This wretched problem has been set,—to augment comfort by putting off right; to sacrifice the superior side of man to the inferior side; to yield up principle to appetite. Cæsar takes charge for the belly, I make over to him the brains,—it is the old sale of at birth-right for the dish of porridge. A little more, and this fatal anomaly would cause a wrong road to be taken toward civilization. The fattening pig would no longer be the king, but the people. Alas! this ugly expedient does not even succeed. No diminution whatever of the malady. In the last ten years—for**

**the last twenty years—the low water-mark of prostitution, of mendicity, of crime, has been stationary, below which evil has not fallen one degree. Of true education, of gratuitous education, there is none. The infant nevertheless requires to know that he is man, and the father that he is citizen. Where are the promises? Where is the hope? Oh, poor wretched humanity! one is tempted to shout for help in the forest; one is tempted to claim support, assistance, and a strong arm from that grand mournful Nature. Can this mysterious ensemble of forces be indifferent to progress? We supplicate, appeal, raise our hands toward the shadow. We listen, wondering if the rustlings will become voices. The duty of the springs and streams should be to babble forth the word "Forward!" One could wish to hear nightingales sing new Marseillaises.**

**Notwithstanding all this, these times of halting are nothing beyond what is normal. Discouragement would be puerile. There are halts, repose, breathing spaces in the march of peoples, as there are winters in the progress of the seasons. The gigantic step, '89, is all the same a fact. To despair would be absurd, but to stimulate is necessary.**

**To stimulate, to press, to chide, to awaken, to suggest to inspire,—it is this function, fulfilled everywhere by writers, which impresses on the literature of this century so high a character of power and originality. To remain faithful to all the laws of art, while combining them with the law of progress,—such is the problem, victoriously solved by so many noble and proud minds.**

**Thence this word *deliverance*, which appears above everything in the light, as if it were written on the very forehead of the ideal.**

**The Revolution is France sublimed. There was a day when France was in the furnace,—the furnace causes wings to grow on certain warlike martyrs,—and from amid the flames this giant came forth archangel. At this day, by all the world, France is called Revolution; and henceforth this word *revolution* will be the name of civilization, until it can be replaced by the word *harmony.* I repeat it: do not seek elsewhere the starting-point and the birth-place of the literature of the nineteenth century. Yes, as many as there be of us, great and small, powerful and unknown, illustrious and obscure, in all our works good or bad, whatever they may be,—poems, dramas, romances, history, philosophy,—at the tribune of assemblies as before the crowds of the theatre, as in the meditation of solitudes; yes, everywhere; yes, always; yes, to combat violence and imposture; yes, to rehabilitate those who are stoned and run down; yes, to sum up logically and to march straight onward; yes, to console, to succour, to relieve, to encourage, to**

**teach; yes, to dress wounds in hope of curing them; yes, to transform charity into fraternity, alms into assistance, sluggishness into work, idleness into utility, centralization into a family, iniquity into justice, the *bourgeois* into the citizen, the populace into the people, the rabble into the nation, nations, into humanity, war into love, prejudice into free examination, frontiers into solderings, limits into openings, ruts into rails, vestry-rooms into temples, the instinct of evil into the desire of good, life into right, kings into men; yes, to deprive religions of hell and societies of the galley; yes, to be brothers to the wretched, the serf, the fellah, the *prolétaire*, the disinherited, the banished, the betrayed, the conquered, the sold, the enchained, the sacrificed, the prostitute, the convict, the ignorant, the savage, the slave, the negro, the condemned, and the damned,—yes, we are thy sons, Revolution!**

**Yes, men of genius; yes, poets, philosophers, historians; yes, giants of that great art of previous ages which is all the light of the past,—O men eternal, the minds of this day salute you, but do not follow you; in respect to you they hold to this law,—to admire everything, to imitate nothing. Their function is no longer yours. They have business with the virility of the human race. The hour which makes mankind of age has struck. We assist, under the full light of the ideal, at that majestic junction of the beautiful with the useful. No actual or possible genius can surpass you, ye men of genius of old; to equal you is all the ambition allowed: but, to equal you, one must conform to the necessities of our time, as you supplied the necessities of yours. Writers who are sons of the Revolution have a holy task. O Homer, their epic poem must weep; O Herodotus, their history must protest; O Juvenal, their satire must dethrone; O Shakespeare, their "thou shalt be king," must be said to the people; O Æschylus, their Prometheus must strike Jupiter with thunderbolts; O Job, their dunghill must be fruitful; O Dante, their hell must be extinguished; O Isaiah, thy Babylon crumbles, theirs must blaze forth with light! They do what you have done; they contemplate creation directly, they observe humanity directly; they do not accept as a guiding light any refracted ray,—not even yours. Like you, they have for their sole starting-point, outside them, universal being: in them, their soul. They have for the source of their work the one source whence flows Nature and whence flows art, the infinite. As the writer of these lines said forty years ago: "The poets and the writers of the nineteenth century have neither masters nor models."[1] No; in all that vast and sublime art of all peoples, in all those grand creations of all epochs,—no, not even thee, Æschylus, not even thee, Dante, not even thee, Shakespeare,—no, they have neither models nor masters. And why have they neither masters nor**

**models? It is because they have one model, Man, and because they have one master, God.**

**[1]Preface to "Cromwell."**

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**BOOK III.**

**TRUE HISTORY.—EVERY ONE PUT IN HIS RIGHT PLACE.**

**CHAPTER I.**

**Here is the advent of the new constellation. It is certain that at the present hour that which has been till now the light of the human race grows pale, and that the old flame is about to disappear from the world.**

**The men of brutal force have, since human tradition existed, shone alone in the empyrean of history; theirs was the only supremacy. Under the various names of kings, emperors, captains, chiefs, princes,—summed up in the word heroes,—this group of an apocalypse was resplendent. They were all dripping with victories. Terror transformed itself into acclamation to salute them. They dragged after them an indescribable tumultuous flame. They appeared to man in a disorder of horrible light. They did not light up the heavens,—they set them on fire. They looked as if they meant to take possession of the Infinite. Rumbling crashes were heard in their glory. A red glare mingled with it. Was it purple? Was it blood? Was it shame? Their light made one think of the face of Cain. They hated one another. Flashing shocks passed from one to the other; at times these enormous planets came into collision, striking out lightnings. Their look was furious. Their radiance stretched out into swords. All that hung terrible above us.**

**That tragic glare fills the past. To-day it is in full process of waning.**

**There is decline in war, decline in despotism, decline in theocracy, decline in slavery, decline in the scaffold. The blade becomes shorter, the tiara is fading away, the crown is simplified; war is raging, the plume bends lower, usurpation is circumscribed, the chain is lightened, the rack is out of countenance. The antique violence of the few against all, called right divine, is coming to an end. Legitimacy, the grace of God, the monarchy of Pharamond, nations branded on the shoulder with the *fleur-de-lis*, the possession of peoples by the right of birth, the long series of ancestors giving right over the living,—these things are yet striving in some places; at Naples, in Prussia, etc; but they are struggling rather than striving,—it is death that strains for life. A stammering which to-morrow will**

**be utterance, and the day after to-morrow a full declaration, proceeds from the bruised lips of the serf, of the vassal, of the *prolétaire*, of the pariah. The gag breaks up between the teeth of the human race. The human race has had enough of the sorrowful path, and the patient refuses to go farther.**

**From this very time certain forms of despotism are no longer possible. The Pharaoh is a mummy, the sultan a phantom, the Cæsar a counterfeit. This stylite of the Trajan columns is anchylosed on its pedestal; it has on its head the excrement of free eagles; it is nihility rather than glory; the bands of the sepulchre fasten this crown of laurels.**

**The period of the men of brutal force is gone. They have been glorious, certainly, but with a glory that melts away. That species of great men is soluble in progress. Civilization rapidly oxidizes these bronzes. At the point of maturity to which the French Revolution has already brought the universal conscience, the hero is no longer a hero without a good reason; the captain is discussed, the conqueror is inadmissible. In our days Louis XIV. invading the Palatinate would look like a robber. From the last century these realities began to dawn. Frederick II., in the presence of Voltaire, felt and owned himself somewhat of a brigand. To be a great man of matter, to be pompously violent, to govern by the sword-knot and the cockade, to forge right upon force, to hammer out justice and truth by blows of accomplished facts, to make brutalities of genius,—is to be grand, if you like; but it is a coarse manner of being grand,—glories announced with drums which are met with a shrug of the shoulders. Sonorous heroes have deafened human reason until to-day; that pompous noise begins now to weary it. It shuts its eyes and ears before those authorized slaughters that they call battles. The sublime murderers of men have had their time; it is in a certain relative forgetfulness that henceforth they will be illustrious and august; humanity, become greater, requires to dispense with them. The food for guns thinks; it reflects, and is actually losing its admiration for being shot down by a cannon-ball.**

**A few figures by the way may not be useless.**

**All tragedy is part of our subject. The tragedy of poets is not the only one; there is the tragedy of politicians and statesmen. Would you like to know how much that tragedy costs?**

**Heroes have an enemy; that enemy is called finance. For a long time the amount of money paid for that kind of glory was ignored. In order to disguise the total, there were convenient little fireplaces like that in which Louis XIV. burned the accounts of Versailles. That day the smoke of one thousand millions of francs**

**passed out the chimney of the royal stove. The nation did not even take notice. At the present day nations have one great virtue,—they are miserly. They know that prodigality is the mother of abasement. They reckon up; they learn book-keeping by double entry. Warlike glory henceforth has its debit and credit account: that renders it impossible.**

**The greatest warrior of modern times is not Napoleon, it is Pitt Napoleon carried on warfare; Pitt created it. It is Pitt who willed all the wars of the Revolution and of the empire; they proceeded from him. Take away Pitt and put Fox in his place, there would then be no reason for that exorbitant battle of twenty-three years, there would be no longer any coalition. Pitt was the soul of the coalition, and he dead, his soul remained amidst the universal war. What Pitt cost England and the world, here it is. We add this bas-relief to his pedestal.**

**In the first place, the expenditure in men. From 1791 to 1814 France alone, striving against Europe, coalesced by England,—France constrained and compelled, expended in butcheries for military glory (and also, let us add, for the defence of territory) five millions of men; that is to say, six hundred men per day. Europe, including the total of France, has expended sixteen millions six hundred thousand men; that is to say, two thousand deaths per day during twenty-three years.**

**Secondly, the expenditure of money. We have, unfortunately, no authentic total, save the total of England. From 1791 to 1814 England, in order to make France succumb to Europe, became indebted to the extent of eighty-one millions, two hundred and sixty five thousand, eight hundred and forty-two pounds sterling. Divide this total by the total of men killed, at the rate of two thousand per day for twenty-three years, and you arrive at this result,—that each corpse stretched on the field of battle has cost England alone fifty pounds sterling.**

**Add the total of Europe,—total unknown, but enormous.**

**With these seventeen millions of dead men, they might have peopled Australia with Europeans. With the eighty millions expended by England in cannon-shots, they might have changed the face of the earth, begun the work of civilization everywhere, and suppressed throughout the entire world ignorance and misery.**

**England pays eighty millions for the two statues of Pitt and Wellington.**

**It is a fine thing to have heroes, but it is an expensive luxury. Poets cost less.**

## CHAPTER II.

**The discharge of the warrior is signed: it is splendour in the distance. The great Nimrod, the great Cyrus, the great Sennacherib, the great Sesostris, the great Alexander, the great Pyrrhus, the great Hannibal, the great Cæsar, the great Timour, the great Louis, the great Frederic, and more great ones,—all are going away.**

**It would be a mistake to think that we reject these men purely and simply. In our eyes five or six of those that we have named are legitimately illustrious; they have even mingled something good in their ravages; their definitive total embarrasses the absolute equity of the thinker, and they weigh nearly even weights in the balance of the injurious and the useful.**

**Others have been only injurious. They are numerous, innumerable even; for the masters of the world are a crowd.**

**The thinker is the weigher. Clemency suits him. Let us therefore say. Those others who have done only evil have one attenuating circumstance,—imbecility.**

**They have another excuse yet,—the mental condition of the human race itself at the moment they appeared; the medium surrounding facts, modifiable, but encumbering.**

**It is not men that are tyrants, but things. The real tyrants are called frontier, track, routine; blindness under the form of fanaticism, deafness and dumbness under the form of diversity of languages; quarrel under the form of diversity of weights, measures, and moneys; hatred resulting from quarrel, war resulting from hatred. All these tyrants may be called by one name,—separation. Division, whence proceeds irresponsible government,—this is despotism in the abstract.**

**Even the tyrants of flesh are mere things. Caligula is much more a fact than a man; he is a result more than an existence. The Roman proscriber, dictator, or Cæsar, refuses the vanquished fire and water,—that is to say, puts his life out. One day of Gela represents twenty thousand proscribed, one day of Tiberius thirty thousand, one day of Sylla seventy thousand. One evening Vitellius, being ill, sees a house lighted up, where people were rejoicing. "Do they think me dead?" says Vitellius. It is Junius Blesus who sups with Tuscus Cæcina; the emperor sends to these drinkers a cup of poison, that they may realize by this sinister end of too joyous a night that Vitellius is living. (Reddendam pro intempestiva licentia mœstam et funebrem noctem qua sentient vivere Vitellius et impresser.) Otho and this same Vitellius forward assassins to each other.**

**Under the Cæsars, it is a marvel to die in one's bed; Pison, to Whom this happened, is noted for that strange incident. The garden of Valerius Asiaticus pleases the emperor; the face of Stateless displeases the empress,—state crimes: Valerius is strangled because he has a garden, And Statilius because he has a face. Basil II., Emperor of the East, makes fifteen thousand Bulgarians prisoners; they are divided into bands of a hundred, and their eyes are put out, with the exception of one, who is charged to conduct his ninety-nine blind comrades. He afterward sends into Bulgaria the whole of this army without eyes. History thus describes Basil II.: "He was too fond of glory."[1] Paul of Russia gave out this axiom: "There is no man powerful save him to whom the emperor speaks; and his power endures as long as the word that he hears." Philip V. of Spain, so ferociously calm at the *auto-da-fés*, is frightened at the idea of changing his shirt, and remains six months in bed without washing and without trimming his nails, for fear of being poisoned, by means of scissors, or by the water in the basin, or by his shirt, or by his shoes. Ivan, grandfather of Paul, had a woman put to the torture before making her lie in his bed; had a newly married bride hanged, and placed the husband as sentinel by her side, to prevent the rope from being cut; had a father killed by his son; invented the process of sawing men in two with a cord; burns Bariatinski himself by slow fire, and, while the patient howls, brings the embers together with the end of his stick. Peter, in point of excellence, aspires to that of the executioner; he exercises himself in cutting off heads. At first he cuts off but five per day,—little enough; but, with application, he succeeds in cutting off twenty-five. It is a talent for a czar to tear away a woman's breast with one blow of the knout.**

**What are all those monsters? Symptoms,—running sores, pus which oozes from a sickly body. They are scarcely more responsible than the sum of a column is responsible for the figures in that column. Basil, Ivan, Philip, Paul, etc., are the products of vast surrounding stupidity. The clergy of the Greek Church, for example, having this maxim, "Who can make us judges of those who are our masters?" what more natural than that a czar,—Ivan himself,—should cause an archbishop to be sewn in a bear's skin and devoured by dogs? The czar is amused,—it is quite right. Under Nero, the man whose brother was killed goes to the temple to return thanks to the gods; under Ivan, a Boyard empaled employs his agony, which lasts for twenty-four hours, in repeating, "O God! protect the czar." The Princess Sanguzko is in tears; she presents, upon her knees, a supplication to Nicholas: she implores grace for her husband, conjuring the master to spare Sanguzko (a Pole guilty of loving Poland) the frightful journey to**

**Siberia. Nicholas listens in silence, takes the supplication, and writes beneath it, "On foot." Then Nicholas goes into the streets, and the crowd throw themselves on his boot to kiss it What have you to say? Nicholas is a madman, the crowd is a brute. From "khan" comes "knez;" from "knez" comes "tzar;" from "tzar" the "czar,"—a series of phenomena rather than an affiliation of men. That after this Ivan you should have this Peter, after this Peter this Nicholas, after this Nicholas this Alexander, what more logical? You all rather contribute to this result. The tortured accept the torture. "This czar, half putrid, half frozen," as Madame de Staël says,—you made him yourselves. To be a people, to be a force, and to look upon these things, is to find them good. To be present, is to give one's consent. He who assists at the crime, assists the crime. Unresisting presence is an encouraging submission.**

**Let us add that a preliminary corruption began the complicity even before the crime was committed. A certain putrid fermentation of pre-existing baseness engenders the oppressor.**

**The wolf is the fact of the forest; it is the savage fruit of solitude without defence. Combine and group together silence, obscurity, easy victory, monstrous infatuation, prey offered from all parts, murder in security, the connivance of those who are around, weakness, want of weapons, abandonment, isolation,—from the point of intersection of these things breaks forth the ferocious beast. A dark forest, whence cries cannot be heard, produces the tiger. A tiger is a blindness hungered and armed. Is it a being? Scarcely. The claw of the animal knows no more than does the thorn of a plant. The fatal fact engenders the unconscious organism. In so far as personality is concerned, and apart from killing for a living, the tiger does not exist. Mouravieff is mistaken if he thinks that he is a being.**

**Wicked men spring from bad things. Therefore let us correct the things.**

**And here we return to our starting-point: An attenuating circumstance for despotism is—idiocy. That attenuating circumstance we have just pleaded.**

**Idiotic despots, a multitude, are the mob of the purple; but above them, beyond them, by the immeasurable distance which separates that which radiates from that which stagnates,—there are the despots of genius; there are the captains, the conquerors, the mighty men of war, the civilizers of force, the ploughmen of the sword.**

**These we have just named. The truly great among them are called Cyrus, Sesostris, Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Napoleon; and, with the qualifications we have laid down, we admire them.**

**But we admire them on the condition of their disappearance. Make room for better ones! Make room for greater ones!**

**Those greater, those better ones, are they new? No. Their series is as ancient as the other; more ancient, perhaps, for the idea has preceded the act, and the thinker is anterior to the warrior. But their place was taken, taken violently. This usurpation is about to cease; their hour comes at last; their predominance gleams forth. Civilization, returned to the true light, recognizes them as its only founders; their series becomes clothed in light, and eclipses the rest; like the past, the future belongs to them; and henceforth it is they whom God will perpetuate.**

**[1]Delandine.**

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## CHAPTER III.

**That history has to be re-made is evident. Up to the present time, it has been nearly always written from the miserable point of view of accomplished fact; it is time to write it from the point of view of principle,—and that, under penalty of nullity.**

**Royal gestures, warlike uproars, princely coronations; marriages, baptisms, and funerals, executions and fêtes; the finery of one crushing all; the triumph of being born king, the prowess of sword and axe; great empires, heavy taxes; the tricks played by chance upon chance; the universe having for a law the adventures of any being, provided he be crowned; the destiny of a century changed by a blow from the lance of a fool through the skull of an imbecile; the majestic *fistula in ano* of Louis XIV.; the grave words of the dying Emperor Mathias to his doctor, trying for the last time to feel his pulse beneath his coverlet and making a mistake,—"Erras, amice hoc est membrum nostrum imperiale sacrocæsareum;" the dance, with castanets of Cardinal Richelieu, disguised as a shepherd before the Queen of France, in the private villa of the Rue de Gaillon; Hildebrand completed by Cisneros; the little dogs of Henri III.; the various Potemkins of Catherine II.,—Orloff here, Godoy there, etc.; a great tragedy with a petty intrigue,—such was history up to our days, alternating between the throne and the altar, lending one ear to Dangeau and another to Dom Calmet, sanctimonious**

**and not stern, not comprehending the true transitions from one age to the other, incapable of distinguishing the climacteric crises of civilization, making the human race mount upward by ladders of silly dates, well versed in puerilities while ignorant of right, of justice, and of truth, and modelled far more upon Le Ragois than upon Tacitus.**

**So true is this, that in our days Tacitus has been the object of strong attack.**

**Tacitus on the other hand,—we do not weary of insisting upon it,—is, like Juvenal, like Suetonius and Lampridius, the object of a special and merited hatred. The day when in the colleges professors of rhetoric shall put Juvenal above Virgil, and Tacitus above Bossuet, will be the eve of the day in which the human race shall have been delivered; when all forms of oppression shall have disappeared,—from the slave-owner up to the pharisee, from the cottage where the slave weeps to the chapel where the eunuch sings. Cardinal Du Perron, who received for Henri IV. blows from the Pope's stick, had the goodness to say, "I despise Tacitus."**

**Up to the epoch in which we live, history has been a courtier. The double identification of the king with the nation and of the king with God, is the work of courtier history. The grace of God begets the right divine. Louis XIV. says, "I am the State!" Madame du Barry, plagiarist of Louis XIV., calls Louis XV. "France;" and the pompously haughty saying of the great Asiatic king of Versailles ends with "France, your coffin taints the camp!"**

**Bossuet writes without hesitation, though palliating facts here and there, the frightful legend of those old thrones of antiquity covered with crimes, and, applying to the surface of things his vague theocratic declamation, satisfies himself by this formula: "God holds in his hand the hearts of kings." That is not the case, for two reasons,—God has no hand, and kings have no heart.**

**We are only speaking, of course, of the kings of Assyria.**

**History, that old history of which we have spoken, is a kind person for princes. It shuts its eyes when a highness says, "History, do not look this way." It has, imperturbably, with the face of a harlot, denied the horrible skull-breaking casque with an inner spike, destined by the Archduke of Austria for the Swiss magistrate Gundoldingen. At the present time this machine is hung on a nail in the Hôtel de Ville of Lucerne; anybody can go and see it: yet history repeats its denial. Moréri calls St. Bartholomew's day "a disturbance." Chaudon, another biographer, thus characterizes the author of the saying to Louis XV., cited above: "A lady of the court, Madame du Barry." History accepts for an attack of apoplexy**

**the mattress under which John II. of England stifled the Duke of Gloucester at Calais.[1] Why is the head of the Infant Don Carlos separated from the trunk in his bier at the Escurial? Philip II., the father, answers: "It is because the Infant having died a natural death, the coffin prepared for him was not found long enough, and they were obliged to cut off the head." History blindly believes in the coffin being too short. What! the father to have his son beheaded! Oh, fie! Only demagogues would say such things.**

**The ingenuousness with which history glorifies the fact, whatever it may be, and however impious it may be, shines nowhere better than in Cantemir and Karamsin,—the one a Turkish historian, the other a Russian historian. The Ottoman fact and the Muscovite fact evidence, when confronted and compared with each other, the Tartar identity. Moscow is not less sinisterly Asiatic than Stamboul. Ivan is in the one as Mustapha is in the other. The gradation is imperceptible between that Christianity and that Mahometanism. The Pope is brother of the Ulema, the Boyard of the Pacha, the knout of the bowstring, and the moujik of the mute. There is to men passing through the streets little difference between Selim who pierces them with arrows, and Basil who lets bears loose on them. Cantemir, a man of the South, an ancient Moldavian hospodar, long a Turkish subject, feels, although he has passed over to the Russians, that he does not displease the Czar Peter by deifying despotism, and he prostrates his metaphors before the sultans: this crouching upon the belly is Oriental, and somewhat Western also. The sultans are divine; their scimitar is sacred, their dagger is sublime, their exterminations are magnanimous, their parricides are good. They call themselves merciful, as the furies are called Eumenides. The blood that they spill smokes in Cantemir with an odour of incense, and the vast slaughtering which is their reign blooms into glory. They massacre the people in the public interest. When some padischah (I know not which)—Tiger IV. or Tiger VI.—causes to be strangled one after the other his nineteen little brothers running frightened round the chamber, the Turkish native historian declares that "it was executing wisely the law of the empire." The Russian historian, Karamsin, is not less tender to the Tzar than was Cantemir to the Sultan; nevertheless, let us say it, in comparison with Cantemir's, the fervency of Karamsin is lukewarmness. Thus Peter, killing his son Alexis, is glorified by Karamsin, but in the same tone in which we excuse a fault. It is not the acceptation pure and simple of Cantemir, who is more upon his knees. The Russian historian only admires, while the Turkish historian adores. No fire in Karamsin, no nerve,—a dull enthusiasm, grayish apotheoses, good-will struck into an icicle, caresses benumbed with**

**cold. It is poor flattery. Evidently the climate has something to do with it. Karamsin is a chilled Cantemir.**

**Thus is the greater part of history made up to the present day; it goes from Bossuet to Karamsin, passing by the Abbé Pluche. That history has for its principle obedience. To what is obedience due? To success. Heroes are well treated, but kings are preferred. To reign is to succeed every morning. A king has to-morrow: he is solvent. A hero may be unsuccessful,—such things happen,—in which case he is but a usurper. Before this history, genius itself, even should it be the highest expression of force served by intelligence, is compelled to continual success. If it fails, ridicule; if it falls, insult. After Marengo, you are Europe's hero, the man of Providence, anointed by the Lord; after Austerlitz, Napoleon the Great; after Waterloo, the ogre from Corsica. The Pope anointed an ogre.**

**Nevertheless, impartial Loriquet, in consideration of services rendered, makes you a marquis. The man of our day who has best executed that surprising gamut from Hero of Europe to Ogre of Corsica, is Fontanes, chosen during so many years to cultivate, develop, and direct the moral sense of youth.**

**Legitimacy, right divine, negation of universal suffrage, the throne a fief, the nation an entailed estate, all proceed from that history. The executioner is also part of it; Joseph de Maistre adds him, divinely, to the king. In England such history is called "loyal" history. The English aristocracy, to whom similar excellent ideas sometimes occur, have imagined a method of giving to a political opinion the name of a virtue,—*Instrumentum regni*. In England, to be a royalist, is to be loyal. A democrat is disloyal; he is a variety of the dishonest man. This man believes in the people,—shame! He would have universal suffrage,—he is a chartist! are you sure of his probity? Here is a republican passing,—take care of your pockets! That is clever. All the world is more witty than Voltaire: the English aristocracy has more wit than Macchiavelli.**

**The king pays, the people do not pay,—this is about all the secret of that kind of history. It has also its own tariff of indulgences. Honour and profit are divided,—honour to the master, profit to the historian. Procopius is prefect, and, what is more. Illustrious by special decree (which does not prevent him from being a traitor); Bossuet is bishop, Fleury is prelate prior of Argenteuil, Karamsin is senator, Cantemir is prince. But the finest thing is to be paid successively by For and by Against, and, like Fontanes, to be made senator through idolatry of, and peer of France through spitting upon, the same idol.**

**What is going on at the Louvre? What is going on at the Vatican, in the Seraglio, Buen Retiro, at Windsor, at Schoenbrünn, at Potsdam, at the Kremlin, at Oranienbaum? Further questions are needless; for there is nothing interesting for the human race beyond those ten or twelve houses, of which history is the door-keeper.**

**Nothing can be insignificant that relates to war, the warrior, the prince, the throne, the court. He who is not endowed with grave puerility cannot be a historian. A question of etiquette, a hunt, a gala, a grand levee, a procession, the triumph of Maximilian, the number of carriages the ladies have following the king to the camp before Mons, the necessity of having vices congenial with the faults of his majesty, the clocks of Charles V., the locks of Louis XVI.; how the broth refused by Louis XV. at his coronation, showed him to be a good king; how the Prince of Wales sits in the Chamber of the House of Lords, not in the capacity of Prince of Wales, but as Duke of Cornwall; how the drunken Augustus has appointed Prince Lubormirsky, who is starost of Kasimirow, under-cupbearer to the crown; how Charles of Spain gave the command of the army of Catalonia to Pimentel because the Pimentels have the title of Benavente since 1308; how Frederic of Brandenburg granted a fief of forty thousand crowns to a huntsman who enabled him to kill a fine stag; how Louis Antoine, grand-master of the Teutonic Order and Prince Palatine, died at Liége from displeasure at not being able to make the inhabitants choose him bishop; how the Princess Borghèse, dowager of Mirandole and of the Papal House, married the Prince of Cellamare, son of the Duke of Giovenazzo; how my Lord Seaton, who is a Montgomery, followed James II. into France; how the Emperor ordered the Duke of Mantua, who is vassal of the empire, to drive from his court the Marquis Amorati; how there are always two Cardinal Barberins living, and so on,—all that is the important business. A turned-up nose becomes an historical fact. Two small fields contiguous to the old Mark and to the duchy of Zell, having almost embroiled England and Prussia, are memorable. In fact the cleverness of the governing and the apathy of the governed have arranged and mixed things in such a manner that all those forms of princely nothingness have their place in human destiny; and peace and war, the movement of armies and fleets, the recoil or the progress of civilization, depend on the cup of tea of Queen Anne or the fly-flap of the Dey of Algiers.**

**History walks behind those fooleries, registering them.**

**Knowing so many things, it is quite natural that it should be ignorant of others. If you are so curious as to ask the name of the English merchant who in 1612 first**

**entered China by the north; of the worker in glass who in 1663 first established in France a manufactory of crystal; of the citizen who carried out in the States General at Tours, under Charles VIII.: the sound principle of elective magistracy (a principle which has since been adroitly obliterated); of the pilot who in 1405 discovered the Canary Islands; of the Byzantine lutemaker who in the eighth century invented the organ and gave to music its grandest voice; of the Campanian mason who invented the clock by establishing at Rome on the temple of Quirinus the first sundial; of the Roman lighterman who invented the paving of towns by the construction of the Appian Way in the year 312 B.C.; of the Egyptian carpenter who devised the dove-tail, one of the keys of architecture, which may be found under the obelisk of Luxor; of the Chaldean keeper of flocks who founded astronomy by his observation of the signs of the zodiac, the starting-point taken by Anaximenes; of the Corinthian calker who, nine years before the first Olympiad, calculated the power of the triple lever, devised the trireme, and created a tow-boat anterior by two thousand six hundred years to the steamboat; of the Macedonian ploughman who discovered the first gold mine in Mount Pangæus,—history, does not know what to say to you: those fellows are unknown to history. Who is that,—a ploughman, a calker, a shepherd, a carpenter, a lighterman, a mason, a lutemaker, a sailor, and a merchant? History does not lower itself to such rabble.**

**There is at Nüremberg, near the Egydienplatz, in a chamber on the second floor of a house which faces the church of St Giles, on an iron tripod, a little ball of wood twenty inches in diameter, covered with darkish vellum, marked with lines which were once red, yellow, and green. It is a globe on which is sketched out an outline of the divisions of the earth in the fifteenth century. On this globe is vaguely indicated, in the twenty-fourth degree of latitude, under the sign of the Crab, a kind of island named Antilia, which one day attracted the attention of two men. The one who had constructed the globe and draw Antilia showed this island to the other, placed his finger upon it, and said, "It is there." The man who looked on was called Christopher Columbus; the man who said, "It is there," was called Martin Behaim. Antilia is America. History speaks of Fernando Cortez, who ravaged America, but not of Martin Behaim, who divined it.**

**Let a man have "cut to pieces" other men; let him have "put them to the sword;" let him have made them "bite the dust,"—horrible expressions, which have become hideously familiar,—and if you search history for the name of that man, whoever he may be, you will find it. But search for the name of the man who invented the compass, and you will not find it.**

**In 1747, in the eighteenth century, under the gaze even of philosophers, the battles of Raucoux and Lawfield, the siege of Sas-de-Gand and the taking of Berg-op-Zoom, eclipse and efface that sublime discovery which to-day is in course of modifying the world,—electricity. Voltaire himself, about that year, celebrated passionately some exploit of Trajan.[2]**

**A certain public stupidity is the result of that history which is superimposed upon education almost everywhere. If you doubt it, see, among others, the publications of Périsse Brothers, intended by the editors, says a parenthesis, for primary schools.**

**A prince who gives himself an animal's name makes us laugh. We rail at the Emperor of China, who makes people call him "His Majesty the Dragon," and we placidly say "Monseigneur le Dauphin."**

**History is the record of domesticity. The historian is no more than the master of ceremonies of centuries. In the model court of Louis the Great there are four historians, as there are four chamber violinists. Lulli leads the one, Boileau the others.**

**In this old method of history,—the only authorized method up to 1789, and classic in every acceptation of the word,—the best narrators, even the honest ones (there are few of them), even those who think themselves free, place themselves mechanically in drill, stitch tradition to tradition, submit to accepted custom, receive the pass-word from the antechamber, accept, pell-mell with the crowd, the stupid divinity of coarse personages in the foreground,—kings, "potentates," "pontiffs," soldiers,—and, all the time thinking themselves historians, end by donning the livery of historiographers, and are lackeys without knowing it.**

**This kind of history is taught, is compulsory, is commended and recommended; all young intellects are more or less saturated with it, its mark remains upon them, their thought suffers through it and releases itself only with difficulty,—we make schoolboys learn it by heart, and I who speak, when a child, was its victim.**

**In such history there is everything except history. Shows of princes, of "monarchs," and of captains, indeed; but of the people, of laws, of manners, very little; and of letters, of arts, of sciences, of philosophy, of the universal movement of thought,—in one word, of man,—nothing. Civilization dates by dynasties, and not by progress; some king or other is one of the stages along the historical road; the true stages, the stages of great men, are nowhere indicated. It explains how Francis II. succeeds to Henri II., Charles IX. to Francis II., and Henri**

**III. to Charles IX.; but it does not tell us how Watt succeeds to Papin, and Fulton to Watt; behind the heavy scenery of the hereditary rights of kings a glimpse of the mysterious sovereignty of men of genius is scarcely obtained. The lamp which smokes on the opaque facades of royal accessions hides the starry light which the creators of civilization throw over the ages. Not one of this series of historians points out the divine relation of human affairs,—the applied logic of Providence; not one makes us see how progress engenders progress. That Philip IV. comes after Philip III., and Charles II. after Philip IV., it would indeed be shameful not to know; but that Descartes continues Bacon, and that Kant continues Descartes; that Las Casas continues Columbus, that Washington continues Las Casas, and that John Brown continues and rectifies Washington; that John Huss continues Pelagius, that Luther continues John Huss, and that Voltaire continues Luther,—it is almost a scandal to be aware of this!**

**[1]There was but one John of England, who put to death (as is supposed) his nephew Arthur, Duke of Bretagne. Perhaps this is what Hugo had in mind.**

**[2]For Trajan, read Louis XV.**

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## CHAPTER IV.

**It is time that all this should be altered. It is time that the men of action should take their place behind, and the men of ideas come to the front. The summit is the head. Where thought is, there is power. It is time that men of genius should precede heroes. It is time to render to Cæsar what is Cæsar's, and to the book what is the book's: such or such a poem, such a drama, such a novel, does more work than all the Courts of Europe together. It is time that history should proportion itself to the reality, that it should allow to each influence its true measure, and that it should cease to place the masks of kings on epochs made in the image of poets and philosophers. To whom belongs the eighteenth century,—to Louis XV. or to Voltaire? Confront Versailles with Ferney, and see from which of these two points civilization flows.**

**A century is a formula; an epoch is a thought expressed,—after which, civilization passes to another. Civilization has phrases: these phrases are the centuries. It does not repeat here what it says there; but its mysterious phrases are bound together by a chain,—logic (*logos*) is within,—and their series constitutes progress. All these phrases, expressive of a single idea,—the divine idea,—write slowly the word Fraternity.**

**All light is at some point condensed into a flame; in the same way every epoch is condensed into a man. The man having expired, the epoch is closed,—God turns the page. Dante dead, is the full-stop put at the end of the thirteenth century: John Huss can come. Shakespeare dead, is the full-stop put at the end of the sixteenth century; after this poet, who contains and sums up every philosophy, the philosophers Pascal, Descartes, Molière, Le Sage, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Diderot, Beaumarchais can come. Voltaire dead, is the full-stop put at the end of the eighteenth century: the French Revolution, liquidation of the first social form of Christianity, can come.**

**These different periods, which we name epochs, have all their dominant points. What is that dominant point? Is it a head that wears a crown, or is it a head that bears a thought? Is it an aristocracy, or is it an idea? Answer yourself. Do you see where the power is? Weigh Francis I. in the scales with Gargantua: put all chivalry in the scale against "Don Quixote."**

**Therefore, every one to his right place. Right about face! and let us now regard the centuries in their true light. In the first rank, minds; in the second, in the third, in the twentieth, soldiers and princes. To the warrior the darkness, to the thinker the pedestal. Take away Alexander, and put in his place Aristotle. Strange thing, that up to this day humanity should have read the Iliad in such a manner as to annihilate Homer under Achilles!**

**I repeat it, it is time that all this should be changed. Moreover, the first impulse is given. Already, noble minds are at work; future history begins to appear, some specimens of the new and magnificent though partial treatments of the subject being already in existence; a general recasting is imminent,—*ad usum populi*. Compulsory education demands true history; and true history will be given: it is begun.**

**Effigies must be stamped afresh. That which was the reverse will become the face, and that which was the face will become the reverse. Urban VIII. will be the reverse of Galileo.**

**The true profile of the human race will re-appear on the different proofs of civilization that the successive ages will offer.**

**The historical effigy will no longer be the man-king; it will be the man-people.**

**Doubtless,—and we shall not be reproached for not insisting on it,—real and veracious history, in indicating the sources of civilization wherever they may be, will not lose sight of the appreciable utility of the sceptre-bearers and sword-**

**bearers at given periods and in special states of humanity. Certain wrestling matches necessitate some resemblance between the two combatants; barbarity must sometimes be pitted against savageness. There are cases of progress by violence. Cæsar is good in Cimmeria, and Alexander in Asia; but for Alexander and Cæsar the second rank suffices.**

**Veracious history, real history, definitive history henceforth charged with the education of the royal infant,—namely, the people,—will reject all fiction, will fail in complaisance, will logically classify phenomena, will unravel profound causes, will study philosophically and scientifically the successive commotions of humanity, and will take less account of the great strokes of the sword than of the grand strokes of the idea. The deeds of light will pass first; Pythagoras will be a much greater event than Sesostris. We have just said it,—heroes, men of the twilight, are relatively luminous in the darkness; but what is a conqueror beside a sage? What is the invasion of kingdoms compared with the opening up of intellects? The winners of minds efface the gainers of provinces. He through whom we think, he is the true conqueror. In future history, the slave Æsop and the slave Plautus will have precedence over kings; and there are vagabonds who will weigh more than certain victors, and comedians who will weigh more than certain emperors.**

**Without doubt, to illustrate what we are saying by means of facts, it is useful that a powerful man should have marked the halting-place between the ruin of the Latin world and the growth of the Gothic world; it is also useful that another powerful man, coming after the first, like cunning on the footsteps of daring, should have sketched out under the form of a catholic monarchy the future universal group of nations, and the beneficial encroachments of Europe upon Africa, Asia, and America. But it is more useful yet to have written the "Divina Commedia" and "Hamlet." No bad action is mixed up with these great works; nor is here to be charged to the account of the civilizer a debt of nations ruined. The improvement of the human mind being given as the result to be obtained, Dante is of greater importance than Charlemagne, and Shakespeare of greater importance than Charles the Fifth.**

**In history, as it will be written on the pattern of absolute truth, that intelligence of no account, that unconscious and trivial being,—the *Non pluribus impar*, the Sultan-sun of Marly,—will appear as nothing more than the almost mechanical preparer of the shelter needed by the thinker disguised as a buffoon, and of the environment of ideas and men required for the philosophy of Alceste. Thus Louis XIV. makes Molière's bed.**

**These exchanges of parts will put people in their true light; the historical optic, renewed, will re-adjust the ensemble of civilization, at present a chaos; for perspective, that justice of geometry, will size the past,—making such a plan to advance, placing another in the background. Every one will assume his real stature; the head-dresses of tiaras and of crowns will only make dwarfs more ridiculous; stupid genuflexions will vanish. From these alterations will proceed right.**

**That great judge We ourselves,—We all,—having henceforth for measure the clear idea of what is absolute and what is relative, deductions and restitutions will of themselves take place. The innate moral sense within man will know its power; it will no longer be obliged to ask itself questions like this,—Why, at the same minute, do people revere in Louis XV. and all the rest of royalty the act for which they bum Deschauffours on the Place de Grève? The quality of kingship will no longer be a false moral weight. Facts fairly placed will place conscience fairly. A good light will come, sweet to the human race, serene, equitable, with no interposition of clouds henceforth between truth and the brain of man, but a definitive ascent of the good, the just, and the beautiful toward the zenith of civilization.**

**Nothing can escape the law which simplifies. By the mere force of things, the material side of facts and of men disintegrates and disappears. There is no shadowy solidity; whatever may be the mass, whatever may be the block, every combination of ashes (and matter is nothing else) returns to ashes. The idea of the atom of dust is in the word "granite,"—inevitable pulverizations. All those granites of oligarchy, aristocracy, and theocracy are doomed to be scattered to the four winds. The ideal alone is indestructible. Nothing lasts save the mind.**

**In this indefinite increase of light which is called civilization, the processes of reduction and levelling are accomplished. The imperious morning light penetrates everywhere,—enters as master, and makes itself obeyed. The light is at work; under the great eye of posterity, before the blaze of the nineteenth century, simplifications take place, excrescences fall away, glories drop like leaves, reputations are riven in pieces. Do you wish for an example,—take Moses. There is in Moses three glories,—the captain, the legislator, the poet. Of these three men contained in Moses, where is the captain to-day? In the shadow, with brigands and murderers. Where is the legislator? Amidst the waste of dead religions. Where is the poet? By the side of Æschylus.**

**Daylight has an irresistible corroding power on the things of night. Hence appears a new historic sky above our heads, a new philosophy of causes and results, a new aspect of facts.**

**Certain minds, however, whose honest and stern anxiety pleases us, object: "You have said that men of genius form a dynasty; now, we will not have that dynasty any more than another." This is to misapprehend, and to fear the word where the thing is reassuring. The same law which wills that the human race should have no owners, wills that it should have guides. To be enlightened is quite different from being enslaved. Kings possess; men of genius conduct,—there is the difference. Between "I am a Man" and "I am the State" there is all the distance from fraternity to tyranny. The forward-march must have a guide-post. To revolt against the pilot can scarcely improve the ship's course; we do not see what would have been gained by throwing Christopher Columbus into the sea. The direction "this way" has never humiliated the man who seeks his road. I accept in the night the guiding authority of torches. Moreover, a dynasty of little encumbrance is that of men of genius, having for a kingdom the exile of Dante, for a palace the dungeon of Cervantes, for a civil list the wallet of Isaiah, for a throne the dunghill of Job, and for a sceptre the staff of Homer.**

**Let us resume.**

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## CHAPTER V.

**Humanity, no longer owned but guided,—such is the new aspect of facts.**

**This new aspect of facts history henceforth is compelled to reproduce. To change the past, that is strange; yet it is what history is about to do. By falsehood? No, by speaking the truth. History has been a picture; she is about to become a mirror. This new reflection of the past will modify the future.**

**The former king of Westphalia, who was a witty man, was looking one day at an inkstand on the table of some one we know. The writer, with whom Jerome Bonaparte was at that moment, had brought home from an excursion among the Alps, made some years before in company with Charles Nodier, a piece of steatitic serpentine carved and hollowed in the form of an inkstand, and purchased of the chamois-hunters of the Mer de Glace. It was this that Jerome Bonaparte was looking at "What is this?" he asked. "It is my inkstand," said the writer; and he added, "it is steatite. Admire how Nature with a little dirt and oxide has made this charming green stone." Jerome Bonaparte replied, "I admire much**

**more the men who out of this stone made an inkstand." That was not badly said for a brother of Napoleon, and due credit should be given for it; for the inkstand is to destroy the sword. The decrease of warriors,—men of brutal force and of prey; the undefined and superb growth of men of thought and of peace; the re-appearance on the scene of the true colossals,—in this is one of the greatest facts of our great epoch. There is no spectacle more pathetic and sublime,—humanity delivered from on high, the powerful ones put to flight by the thinkers, the prophet overwhelming the hero, force routed by ideas, the sky cleaned, a majestic expulsion.**

**Look! raise your eyes! the supreme epic is accomplished. The legions of light drive backward the hordes of flame.**

**The masters are departing; the liberators are arriving! Those who hunt down nations, who drag armies behind them,—Nimrod, Sennacherib, Cyrus, Rameses, Xerxes, Cambyses Attila, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Alexander, Cæsar, Bonaparte,—all these immense wild men are disappearing. They die away slowly,—behold them touch the horizon; they are mysteriously attracted by the darkness; they claim kindred with the shade,—thence their fatal descent. Their resemblance to other phenomena of the night restores them to that terrible unity of blind immensity, a submersion of all light; forgetfulness, shadow of the shadow, awaits them.**

**But though they are thrown down, they remain formidable. Let us not insult what has been great. Hooting would be unbecoming before the burying of heroes; the thinker should remain grave in presence of this donning of shrouds. The old glory abdicates, the strong lie down: mercy for those vanquished conquerors! peace to those warlike spirits now extinguished! The darkness of the grave interposes between their glare and ourselves. It is not without a kind of religious terror that one sees planets become spectres.**

**While in the engulfing process the flaming pleiad of the men of brutal force descends deeper and deeper into the abyss with the sinister pallor of approaching disappearance, at the other extremity of space, where the last cloud is about to fade away, in the deep heaven of the future, henceforth to be azure, rises in radiancy the sacred group of true stars,—Orpheus, Hermes, Job, Homer, Æschylus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hippocrates, Phidias. Socrates, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes, Euclid, Pythagoras, Lucretius, Plautus, Juvenal, Tacitus, Saint Paul, John of Patmos, Tertullian, Pelagius, Dante, Gutenberg, Joan of Arc, Christopher Columbus, Luther, Michael, Angelo, Copernicus, Galileo, Rabelais,**

**Calderon, Cervantes Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Kepler, Milton, Molière, Newton, Descartes, Kant, Piranesi, Beccaria, Diderot, Voltaire, Beethoven, Fulton, Montgolfier, Washington. And this marvellous constellation, at each instant more luminous, dazzling as a glory of celestial diamonds, shines in the clear horizon, and ascending mingles with the vast dawn of Jesus Christ.**

**THE END.**