NOVA HIBERNIA

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AT THE SIGN OF THE VAN
ADVENTURES IN LIFE AND LETTERS
HEINRICH HEINE
PALMS OF PAPYRUS
NOVA HIBERNIA

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IRISH POETS AND DRAMATISTS OF TODAY AND YESTERDAY

BY

MICHAEL MONAHAN

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TO

CAPTAIN MITCHELL McDONALD

A man out of Plutarch, who in our day has revived the heroic legend of friendship, this book of Irish heroes is inscribed, with every sentiment of honour and affection by his friend

THE AUTHOR

NEW YORK, January, 1914

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THE first hint we had of it was in a manner unlooked-for enough. My old friend, Captain Costigan, looked in at the Cave of Harmony the other night, after seeing the Fotheringay home from one of her undoubted triumphs. I should mention that she had just come in from the provinces and had made a brilliant *rentrée.* The London critics still hesitated as to the true value of her acting,—blinded by the very splendour of her "janius," as Costigan would have it,—but in spite of their flimsy reservations, she went on her conquering way.

The metropolis was now at her feet. Never did she seem more beautiful; never was her impassive self-content more strikingly manifest. Her admirers, enviously dubbed the Costigan *claque,* called it a divine lan-

guor, the repose of genius and conscious power. Her detractors affirmed that it was mere animal stupidity; that she continued to act, as in the days of Mr. Thackeray, with an utter incapability of real passion—some of them even said, with a very slight degree of common intelligence. Howbeit, the Siddons herself did not compel all suffrages, and as the Captain finely said, there is always a skulking cloud whose office it is to shut out the sun—though, perhaps, the moon would be a neater simile.

On this night of my story the Fotheringay had played *Juliet* in a manner worthy of the best traditions of the stage. I myself had it on the excellent authority of the Captain, whose eyes moistened and whose tongue tripped a little as he recounted for us the fervid encomiums of the foyer. A whisper went round the company that a certain young gentleman of good family—a Mr. Pendennis, I think, and a nephew of the famous clubman—had been hard hit by the Fotheringay; and

it was added that the *éclat* of this night's performance would probably clinch the conquest. Captain Costigan hears well when he likes, but of this piece of gossip he seemed discreetly oblivious.

Something in my old friend's manner betokened that there was more on his mind than the latest triumph of his gifted daughter, and we were soon to learn what it was. I may say that the late Mr. Thackeray, in his memoirs of Captain Costigan, has hinted obscurely at the alleged bibulous propensities of that gallant gentleman and soldier. In this I am afraid Mr. Thackeray, with all his genius, betrayed the insular prejudice of his nation. It is also true that in his printed recollections Mr. Thackeray (who wrote much on high life and plumed himself on his acquaintance with gentility), sometimes fell into the vulgar habit of referring to the Captain as "Cos." The familiarity is one of which I was never a witness, and I doubt if Mr. Thackeray would have taken the liberty with his living sub-

ject which he has ventured upon in the memoirs aforesaid.

As for the Captain's drinking, no friend to his memory would dispute that he took his negus like a man and a gentleman to boot. Captain Costigan was of an extreme sensibility (which, indeed, is common to his race), and his tears flowed easily when he was in the drink. But if this is to form an indictment against him, you will be making a sad business of history.

The word recalls me. Captain Costigan, after comforting himself with a mixture steaming hot and fragrant, coughed with a slight emphasis that the company might note him, and then, laying a hand on his breast, said in a tone of strong feeling:

"Gentlemen, to-night at least it shall not be said of me, as of *Polonius* in the play, 'still harping on his daughter.' Gratifying to my pathernal pride as are these testimonies to the histhrionic janius of her who is the light of my life"—here the Captain was overcome by a

natural emotion, but gathering himself together, went on bravely—"and whose tinder feet I have guided up the steep iminence of fame, my bosom now swells with a weightier cause of joy. It is not for Jack Costigan to boast, gentlemen, but the pathriot comes before the father. Less than a half hour ago I had it from my brilliant young friend 'Boz' —I should say Mr. Charles Dickens of the press—that the Ministry has brought in a bill of Home Rule for Ireland, which is acceptable to all factions of my countrymen at Westminster save the few who can pipe to no tune less thruculent than the 'Boyne Water.' Gentlemen, the imperishable glory of rendering long delayed justice to my counthry has fallen to the Tories, in spite of nearly two centuries of hollow profession by the Whigs.* The distinies of the British Empire are secured by this act of a magnanimous policy.

* In view of history now in the making, this trifling error may be pardoned the speaker, should the major event be fulfilled.

I call on you to fill your glasses and drink, without heel-taps, to *Nova Hibernia!*"

A burst of applause followed the Captain's speech, and as with our gallant and lamented friend, it was always a word and a song, you may be sure it wasn't long before he gave us in his best voice Ned Lysaght's fervid ditty, "Our Island." And how the glasses rang and the lights tipped at us as he intoned the sentiment!—

> For, ah! 'tis our dear native island,
> A fertile and fine little island.
> May Orange and Green
> No longer be seen
> Bestained with the blood of our island!

Nor did we let him off with that. Indeed before the party broke up, the honest Captain had quite sung himself out. But I shall not soon forget how he trolled the "Monks of the Screw," and we made a chorus of it that would have gladdened the heart of Prior Jack Curran himself.

. . . . . .

Ah, me! was it a dream what the Captain said and the merry company pledged in the Cave of Harmony,—a whimsical dream turning a fair hope, as so often before, into loss and derision? God forbid! It is something to have lived for if we shall see that People take its rightful place after how much oppression and scorn and weary misdirected effort! If this thing shall be, of a truth, I shall hail as its first sign the passing of that species of Irishman whose few good qualities have not weighed with the amount of shame he has brought upon us. He does not show himself so often in real life to-day; is not so busy posing and sentimentalising as of yore; now playing the buffoon covetous of laughter and careless of ridicule, and anon making a pitiful display of touched dignity or wounded pride. I hope it may not be long ere it will be a genuine curiosity to find him slobbering, hectoring, bragging and begging in the merciless pages of Thackeray.

It seems to me an added touch of mockery

to the misfortunes of Ireland that a maudlin patriotism has at all times existed as a libel on the national character. The professional aspect which it has often assumed, the posturing, bad taste and rhetorical extravagance which have always marked it, have never failed to draw the shafts of a hostile criticism, and to offer a fair mark for the humours of caricature. Both have overdone their work, but it cannot be denied that there has been a basis of truth for the libel. No Englishman ever understood the Irish character better than the creator of Costigan—who, by the way, is not offensive on the score of patriotism. Few writers have dealt with us more unsparingly, though he was too great not to mingle a certain saving kindness with his sharpest satire. He might have been more kind and more just. The mind which conceived *Colonel Newcome,* the "best gentleman in fiction," was easily capable of it. *Major O'Dowd* will hardly serve us instead, though as little

pains as Thackeray took with him, he is worth most of the Irishmen in fiction.

Since the Celtic Renaissance began, with its deep spiritual and patriotic motive, with its literary marvels as if owing to a new descent of Fiery Tongues,—the one troubling of the pool in these latter years so barren of faith and wonder,—the critics, so long hostile or merely contemptuous, have taken to considering us more seriously. This rebirth of genius and spirituality has served Ireland well. More true light, more education will do the rest. The pitiable subjection in which this people has so long been held, —of its own loving, ignorant choice, it must be said,—by a power which has too often mingled politics with religion, is fast giving way. Nay, in a vital sense it is already dissolved. Neither this power, strong in the grace of age-long reverence and fidelity, nor any other on the earth, will ever again dare dictate a backward step to a people pressing

forward to the goal of liberty. History will not repeat itself in this regard for the Irish people.

. . . . . .

So, whether you call it a dream or not, I'll believe it—yes, as though Tim Healy, M. P., instead of Costigan, had told me. The refrain of Ned Lysaght's ditty is still with me—would that he might hear it, set to the new tune of hope and promise! And so to conclude, Sir—asking a fair pardon for the few political observations above injected—I pledge you Captain Costigan's toast,

Nova Hibernia!

With this addition,

Esto perpetua!

YEATS AND SYNGE

I

THAT the truest and deepest poetry must often seem a vanity and a foolishness to the world not intimately concerned or spiritually indifferent, needs not to be proven:—it is an axiom that instantly recalls Wordsworth in his earlier period, and even more aptly, Blake; and in these latter days, the Irish poets Yeats and Synge.

Yeats is the poet of the banshee, of the leprechaun, of the lonesome Irish wind, of the mystery of the swaying reeds, the murmuring pool, and of all that uncharted realm of the imagination "where there is nothing." But he is a poet, don't forget that, and he has the real frenzy, instead of a literary attachment and a facility of making rhymes. Poetry may be mere moonshine, and in the case of Yeats, it is perhaps only the shadow of moon-

shine:—still is it the miracle of the human mind, the most authentic proof of the god within us. This the world has ever felt, for the bearer of the sacred fire, the possessor of the true poetical gift, has always held the highest place in the intellectual sphere.

It is, however, true that the poet threatens to become extinct, like the dodo, and that is the best possible reason why you should make a point of seeing one of the last of the race. An Irish poet, too, for in spite of his English preciosity of style, Yeats has more deeply explored the sources of Irish poetical inspiration than any of his forerunners, and he is without a living rival. I do not agree with the too fervid admirers of Mr. Yeats, who would place him even above Moore, one of the world's great lyrists; but I will grant that he often seems more spiritually Irish. His distinction is so rare indeed and the quality of his work so far removed from general appreciation, that one is puzzled to account for his extraordinary vogue among his compatriots.

Something of it is no doubt referable to the present Celtic renaissance in which Mr. Yeats has borne a foremost part that, even more than his poetry, commends him to the esteem and gratitude of Ireland.

But it is as a poet that I like to think of him, and it is as a poet that you will be glad to hear and see him. Should you require an introduction to his work, read his verses about "the old priest Peter Gilligan," and if there be a soul in you, it will respond to the awe and mystery of human life, the deep spiritual sense of common things, which this poet is charged to interpret.

Both Yeats and Synge have left the beaten path in quest of themes congenial to their talent. They have intellectually gone far afield, while actually remaining amongst and taking their subject-matter from their own people. Yet there is nothing unfamiliar, at a first glance, in the *material* employed by Yeats and Synge,—fairies and leprechauns and all

manner of "little people" from the ancient popular mythology; legendary ladies, princes, heroes and champions; fisher folk, farmers, herds, beggars, tinkers, the wayfarers of the road. It is the *use* they have made of this material, itself a trite and oft turned over stock, that has dignified their productions with the sober name of art. And surely if literature has any miracle to show in these days, lacking which it is not literature but a degraded counterfeit,—it need not go beyond the work of Yeats and Synge. What both men have had the courage to do is (in the words of the former) to "speak of their emotions without fear or moral ambition, to come out from under the shadow of other men's minds, to be utterly themselves." Of the two, Yeats is the longer and better known to us as a poet of very rare spiritual distinction:—years ago Arthur Symons praised his work as more thoroughly fulfilling an austere definition of poetry than that of any contemporary. He began an artist and it would be hard to

name a modern poet who has so little inferior work to reproach him. He has visited and lectured us, and his work is known to the cultivated in this country.

As I have said, Yeats is avowedly given to the mystic and the spiritual, to which his Celtic heritage naturally inclines him; and he has made more of these elements than any preceding Irish poet. Moore, who remains unrivaled as a lyric melodist singing of love and patriotism and the past glories of Erin, scarcely touched these rich sources of the new Irish poetry:—he lived three-fourths of his life out of Ireland and inevitably his work was conceived mainly in the English literary tradition. There were rarer treasures at home, as we have since discovered, than he went questing for in Khorassan and Cashmere.

Yeats is easily first in this old but unworked province. He has "staked out his claim," as we say, and made it his own. The discernment which he thus evinced as a very young man, no less than the fine confidence in his

own powers to make the best of his chosen poetical domain, is not the least notable thing in the story. There is something alien and un-Irish in the calm, consistent, matter-of-fact way that Yeats has gone to work to realise upon his poetical heritage; but this is doubtless to be laid to the account of early English influences and associations. Both England and Ireland, though not of course in equal measure, went to the making of the poet and artist in Yeats. Ireland, it may be said, gave the vision of things invisible and England the discipline and restraint without which the poet's rarest findings were frittered away in a waste of words.

Rare poet as is Yeats, he is always the conscious artist, in his prose as in his verse. One could scarcely name another living writer of English whose prose is all that prose should be and yet so worthy of a poet. And prose, he would have us believe, is his left hand. Take this censure upon the decriers of Synge's first play:—"Some spontane-

ous dislike had been but natural, for genius like his can but slowly, amid what it has of harsh and strange, set forth the nobility of its beauty and the depth of its compassion; but the frenzy that would have silenced his master-work was, like most violent things, artificial, the defense of virtue by those that have but little, which is the pomp and gallantry of journalism and its right to govern the word."—

Or this exquisite rebuke to moral partisans and casuists, the plague of Ireland:—"How can one, if one's mind be full of obstructions and images created not for their own sake but for the sake of party, even if there were still the need, find words that delight the ear, make pictures to the mind's eye, discover thoughts that tighten the muscles, or quiver and tingle in the flesh, and stand like St. Michael with the trumpet that calls the body to resurrection?" . . .

Yeats, though a Protestant or at least a non-Catholic (as also was Synge), has had to

battle with the mighty prejudice that in Ireland will not tolerate a man's taking original ground as against the traditional or universally sanctioned position. Nobly he refers to this when he says that "though I was never convinced that the anatomies of last year's leaves are a living forest, or thought a continual apologetic could do other than make the soul a vapour and the body a stone, or believed that literature can be made by anything but by what is still blind and dumb within ourselves, I have had to learn how hard in one who lives where forms of expression and habits of thought have been born, not for the pleasure of begetting, but for the public good, is that purification from insincerity, vanity, malignity, arrogance, which is the discovery of style."

In Ireland the religion and the moral attitude of the great majority, as well as the historical position sustaining or thought to be sustaining these, are against experiments in art that involve any cleavage with "things settled

for good and all," and especially for the good of the Catholic laity. Moore, although a loyal Catholic, was never entirely comfortable with this sentiment, and he has suffered from it; Gerald Griffin, rather than take issue with it, hid his great powers in a monastery; Banim became the object of its anathema and aversion. These are but a few instances snatched at random. Hence Yeats tells us that the man who doubted the fabulous ancient (Irish) kings running up to Adam, or found but mythology in some old tale, was as hated as if he had doubted the authority of Scripture. Another instance was the riot in the Dublin theatre over the use of the word "shift" (shirt) in Synge's play, as a slander upon Ireland's womanhood!

Yeats is a good fighter himself, as may be surmised from the extracts given, ready in the furtherance of his ideals to "attack things that are as dear to many as some holy image carried hither and thither by some broken clan." I think it was well for him all the

same that he was not born and bred in the Catholic majority, where the heart of him might have been broken in his efforts to prove that there is any real source of poetical inspiration or literary enterprise or historical pride than the Church and the Saints and the legendary kings in Ireland.

In his poetical one-act drama, "The Green Helmet," full of power and wizardry, Yeats exhibits that divine folly of the poet which transcends the best wisdom of the world. Its lesson should be close taken to heart in Ireland, maugre the Church, the moral attitude and the historical position:—in Ireland where the poet tells us.

Neighbour wars on neighbour, and why there is no man knows,
And if a man is lucky, all wish his luck away,
And take his good name from him between a day and a day!

Mr. Yeats is, of course, speaking of a legendary Ireland, not later, it may be supposed,

than the Tuatha-da-Danaan, those fine old contemporaries of Pharaoh! . . .

In "Kathleen-ni-Houlihan" Yeats has expressed the destiny of Ireland with the simplicity of genius and at the same time a poetic power of vision and feeling which lifts it far above the current dramatic literature of our day. This Playlet would alone justify the Irish literary movement which has caused priests and "patriots" so much anxiety. It is a spiritual treasure, immortal as anything that has come out of Ireland!

. . . . . .

Of Synge, friend and co-worker of Yeats, one must speak less confidently to an American audience. Just now attention is fixed upon him by reason of his recent, untimely death, and in no small degree by the splendid tribute of his surviving friend and peer. Yet of the two, waiving the specific gifts of poetry and craftsmanship, I am not sure but that Synge has achieved the more difficult and

original work. He has certainly startled Irishmen far more and is a tougher bone of contention amongst them. Perhaps also it must be admitted that few besides Irishmen will trouble to try and understand him. For his work involves a reading and comprehension of the Irish peasant character which goes deep under the surface—is, in truth, to all intents and purposes, a new reading. A thing both new and true is very rare indeed, and the finding of such a treasure-trove has been the literary fortune of J. M. Synge.

Nobody ever wrote Irish peasant dialect like Synge, and yet, reading it, one is penetrated with a sense of its verity, as well as amazed at its lyric beauty, passion, tenderness, hatred, scorn, invective,—the entire gamut of human feeling. That the Irish are a fanciful people is tolerably well known, and Synge's work will bring home to many the regrettable fact that they lose much by transplantation; while the critic will be forced to admit that a fiery, sincere, passionate and

spiritual people, who have remained simple by the grace of God, can speak a natural poetry in their daily lives that owes nothing to literary forms or traditions. No Irish writer has ever made us understand this like Synge, and so completely has he succeeded that we are apt to forget the genius that stands behind his puppets, and in the reading we go back again and again to marvel at this wonderful peasant speech—this dialect that in the essentials of true poetry puts to blush so many pages of "fine literature!" So deep is the illusion produced that we take his word for it when the artist assures us that the wildest sayings in his "Playboy of the Western World" are tame indeed compared with the fancies one may hear at any little hillside cottage of Geesala, or Carraroe, or Dingle Bay. On reflection, we see that the originality of the artist is in no wise questioned—everything has undergone the transmuting touch of genius.

Mr. Yeats pronounces this play "the

strangest, the most beautiful expression in drama of that Irish fantasy which, overflowing through all Irish literature that has come out of Ireland itself, is the unbroken character of Irish genius."

This is high praise and less competent critics than Yeats are even more eulogistic. I believe, however, that Synge was but finding himself and that we should have had greater work from him had he not been cut off under his fortieth year. So I think highly of the sombre little drama, "Riders to the Sea," but I should hesitate to call it, in the language of an Irish eulogist, "a tragedy which, for dramatic irony and noble pity, has no equal among its contemporaries." That it is a masterpiece of its kind and one of the finest fruits of modern Irish literary genius, may be granted without difficulty. The true tragic note has seldom been more effectively struck than in the final scene, with the old mother mourning the last of her sons taken by the cruel sea.

MAURYA

[*Drops Michael's clothes across Bartley's feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him.*]

It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that's stinking.

CATHLEEN

It's getting old she is, and broken.

NORA [*In a whisper to Cathleen*]

She's quiet now and easy; but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael, and would anyone have thought that?

CATHLEEN [*Slowly and clearly*]

An old woman will soon be tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

MAURYA

[*Puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on Bartley's feet*]

They're all together this time, and the end is come.

May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Shaemas and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn (*bending her head*); and may He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of everyone is left living in the world.

[*She pauses, and the keen rises a little more loudly from the women, then sinks away*]

MAURYA [*Continuing*]

Michael has a clean burial in the far north by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied.

Synge was in Yeats's description of him "a shifting, silent man, full of hidden passion, who loved wild islands because there, set out in the light of day, he saw what lay hidden in himself." There is a pathos in his own life-story,—bitter and lonely and sad, with the blighting presage of early death upon it,—that strangely contrasts with the wild and boisterous humour of his plays. This, however, is but to say that he was truly of the soil himself and one with his people.

For the moment the world is extraordinarily moved and curious about Synge: as is usually seen when it loses unwittingly a genius.

II

THE row over Synge's "Playboy" in New York and elsewhere called forth a great deal of newspaper discussion, but I have seen nothing that went to the root of the matter. There was much calling of names, as proper to an Irish dispute, and an apparent sophistication of the argument on both sides. The debate elicited a characteristic tirade from Bernard Shaw, the best part of which was his fling at the pseudo-Irish of America who, utterly unqualified to judge themselves, protest against Synge's dramatic picture of native Irish character and conduct. But even Mr. Shaw missed or purposely evaded the underlying motive of the hue-and-cry against Synge and the ultimate point at issue.

That motive is religious, or rather ecclesiastical in its nature, and it has been pro-

nounced from the very beginning against the whole literary movement of which Synge was a part. Such of my readers as are familiar with that movement, more properly described as a spiritual and intellectual ferment, or who have looked into George Moore's lately published book, "Hail and Farewell," need no information on this head. The trouble with the "Playboy" is the trouble with everything Irish which is so unfortunate as to come under the ban of priestly censure. Nowhere in the world are priestly sensibilities so acute and easily wounded as in Ireland, and justly so, since nowhere in the world has the priest so complete a dominion over the popular mind.

Be it remembered also that there is no jealousy like Irish jealousy, so cordial and implacable, so cheerfully dissembled, open as the sun and hidden as the grave. (Paradoxically, it is no less true that there is no generosity like Irish generosity: that is why it is so hard to understand us!) But of all kinds of Irish jealousy the most formidable is that of

the priests, in any matter affecting their spiritual leadership and control of the Irish people. Not to have grasped this fact is to have missed the chief clue to that perplexed and checkered history.

Every Irishman is an aristocrat, says Lecky. The Roman Catholic hierarchy are the true aristocracy of Ireland, congenial because sprung from the soil, naturally intolerant because of their lowly origin, and venerable from ages of undisputed supremacy. The Irish people have wandered their full stint in the deserts of misery and oppression, solaced like Israel, with the belief that they were fulfilling a peculiar providence of God. To weep by the waters of Babylon, to wear the chains of foreign taskmasters, such was the destiny of that older Chosen People to whom the Irish have been so fond of likening themselves. Heaven knows they were richly justified in making the sad parallel. For centuries the faithful Irish have dreamed only of

the Kingdom of God, looking away with the eyes of the spirit from the unhappy, beautiful land of their earthly exile to their assured inheritance beyond the skies. Ireland has fortified her hope with dreams, and visions, and prophecies, all in the inspired Jewish manner and all, it would seem, speaking without sanctification, to as vain purpose. It was a kind of national plagiarism induced by the ecclesiastical habit that has so rooted itself in the blood of the Irish people. So it has been said that the religion of the Jews was not so much a religion as a national misfortune. In no country in the world is the ecclesiastical spirit so strong—it has killed off patriotism, literature, enterprise and initiative of every kind in the least degree incompatible with its claims and prerogatives. Since the Act of Union the priests have been the strongest part of the British garrison in Ireland, content that England should govern the country *pro forma,* while they were suffered to rule the

Irish people *de facto*. And the Church has flourished in Ireland, though the people have dwindled and decayed or fled beyond seas, so that old prophecies as to the country ever being freed and made a nation again are little now regarded. There is scarce a smouldering hint of the glorious flame of 'Forty-eight, the last genuine outburst of the long vaunted national spirit, and the people seem about to be reconciled to their destiny. The destiny of everlasting union with England? Oh, no! —the true destiny of Ireland, say the pious ones, and those who rule opinion, is to remain the Chief Seminary of the Catholic Church—a distinction which she may well claim to-day. And there is hardly enough of the old fiery but futile patriotism left in the country to raise a protest. The priests are suffered to have their way—and the people emigrate! Yet all may well be, in that phrase so consecrated by Irish usage, "for the greater glory of God."

Synge was neither a Catholic nor a Protes-

tant!—he was an artist, and he did his work like an artist, not like a Protestant or a Catholic, in a country where religion dominates the humblest mind. The result was astonishing: Ireland had produced a genius unawares, but as is customary where mediocrity has long been the rule, opinion was divided as to whether he merited praise or a halter. In the heat of the contention he died suddenly—one may be allowed to say most lamentably—and the battle is going on over his bones.

Now it will be asked, how did Synge run foul of Irish ecclesiasticism in his plays? Simply by departing from the long prevalent caricatures of fiction and comedy, the Larry Brannigans and Pat Molloys, and making his studies with artistic severity from the life. The Irishman,—the commonest Irishman, since Mr. Shaw will not allow us the term "peasant,"—is far more complex and therefore less easily characterised than we might believe from accepted types in play and novel. He is not at all the invariably good-

natured clown or Handy Andy as therein depicted; but quite the contrary, is a being of moods and passions, of contrasting yet humanly consistent traits, simple yet shrewd, candid yet cunning, kind yet vindictive, drunken maybe, yet devout, such as Synge has observed and painted him. Had he been content merely to revamp the old scarecrows of Irish comedy, his name had perhaps never crossed the Channel, not to say the Atlantic.

In one of Synge's plays a drunken tinker, his mistress and his hag of a mother do some irreverence to a priest who reflects no great honour upon the Order of Melchizedek. The whole scene and conception are "low," it may be granted, but strictly within the province of dramatic art. Synge has as valid a right to his *Michael Byrne* as Shakespeare to his *Christopher Sly*. So in the "Playboy" a simpleton of a fellow has some speeches in which he invokes the "Holy Father" and the "Scarlet Cardinals of the Court of Rome." In the given situation nothing could be more

exquisitely comic and at the same time, more natural in the mouth of an *omadhawn.* There is also in this, as in other plays by Synge, much loose talk of God and the Virgin and the Saints, not as intended irreverence but as a transcript of the popular speech. Poetic beauty is scarcely ever absent from these speeches and only an ear sharpened for offence would take umbrage at them. Synge never appears in his plays as a scoffer at things sacred or religious, nor is there a trace of polemics in any of them. He limited himself strictly to his artistic province, reproducing life and character as he found them in years of the most familiar association with the people. His little book on the Arran Islands fully reveals his method in all its anxious integrity, and it contains the germ of his plays.

Thus we have the head and front of Synge's offending before us. His plays do not flatter priestly sensibilities—they even wound ecclesiastical coquetry in a land where the priest is supreme.

THOMAS MOORE

Oh, forgive, if while list'ning to music whose breath
Seemed to circle his name with a charm against death,
He should feel a proud Spirit within him proclaim—
"Ev'n so shalt thou live in the echoes of Fame:

"Ev'n so, tho' thy memory should now die away,
'Twill be caught up again in some happier day;
And the hearts and the voices of Erin prolong
Thro' the answering future thy NAME *and thy* SONG!"
—Irish Melody.

THE usage of biography requires me to state, at the outset, that the sweetest of all Irish poets and English lyrists, Thomas Moore, was born in Dublin on May 28, 1779, and died at Sloperton Cottage, Wiltshire, in England, in the year 1852.

A charming story is preserved of a grand reception held at the Lord Lieutenant's house

in Dublin when the last century was still in its teens. Among the guests was a lady whose husband, a British military officer, had been ordered on that very evening to rejoin his regiment for active service. Europe was filled with the alarum of war. The forces of fate were closing in upon the Corsican and the terrific struggle of the "last days" was at hand. Many were the gentle hearts that shared a dumb sense of dread, a fear that shrank from expression, with her who amid the brilliant throng in the Viceroy's palace sate preoccupied with her own sadness. And you will not marvel at this—a common incident of the time—knowing how they danced and revelled on the very eve of Waterloo.

In such a mood, we are told, the lady thus suddenly bereaved, wondered pettishly at the extraordinary deference which the whole company united in paying to a little gentleman who came late in the evening, and whose simple black dress contrasted strongly with the gold lace of the viceregal staff and the

garish splendour of the military corps. Presently the little gentleman was led to the piano. After preluding a moment he struck the keys with resounding harmony—

Go where glory waits thee,
But while fame elates thee,
Oh, still remember me!

Ah, she listened now with a flying heart to words that made poignantly real for her the sentence of separation. Then the matchless voice, thrilling with power and sweetness, sank to the softest note of sympathy:—

When around thee dying,
Autumn leaves are lying,
Oh! then remember me.
And at night when gazing
On the gay hearth blazing,
Oh! still remember me.

Still the wondrous voice sang on, a murmur of polite applause rising at each cessation of the music. But ere the final bravos came, one overburthened heart had given

such token of its emotion as to gain a lasting place in the bright tradition of the poet-minstrel.

The singer was Thomas Moore; the song one of the earliest, in point of time, of the immortal Irish Melodies. Many years afterward the clever American, N. P. Willis, fell under the same spell at the house of Lady Blessington in London. Willis tells us that he had heard of women fainting at a song of Tom Moore's, but, judging from the effect on an old stager like himself, he thought a gentler heart should have broken. A more illustrious witness, the author of "Childe Harold," was wont to weep over the Irish Melodies quite as sincerely as did the lady at the Lord Lieutenant's whose story has come down to us.

There was in truth a vast deal of sentiment in the world when George the Third was king and even up to the accession of the Fourth of that august line. A great English writer has described Moore as twittering

away in anger from the latter royal personage upon his recanting the liberal views which he had formerly professed and which had given a fallacious hope to the friends of Ireland. The touch is one of the neatest of Mr. Thackeray's satirical humour, but it is scarcely a half truth. Moore himself tells us:

"Luckily the list of benefits showered upon me from that high quarter may be despatched in a few sentences. At the request of the Earl of Moira, one of my earliest and best friends, His Royal Highness graciously permitted me to dedicate to him my translation of the Odes of Anacreon. I was twice, I think, admitted to the honour of dining at Carlton House; and when the Prince, on his being made Regent in 1811, gave his memorable fête, I was one of the crowd—about fifteen hundred I believe—who enjoyed the privilege of being his guests on that occasion."

So the story of Moore's intimacy with Brummel's "fat friend," whom he has so pungently satirised in "The Twopenny Post

Bag," must be dismissed, *malgré* Mr. Thackeray, as a myth. Yet it is in a degree true to the sentiment or, rather, bathos of that queer Georgian period. The French Revolution had been followed by an aftermath of hysteria which was fearfully prolonged. In all the literature of the time there is an overplus of sentiment and declamation. The advocates of reaction, including such contrasted types as the great Burke and "Carotid-artery-cutting" Castlereagh, are quite as strenuous in this regard as the upholders of liberty and equality. Even the all-conquering Napoleon writes his bulletins in the manner and almost in the measure of the long since discredited Ossian.

Barrington's vivid sketches of society in the Irish Capital show how powerfully the emotional Celtic temperament was acted upon by the prevailing spirit. (Alas! was there not a bloody and abortive revolution to be traced to the same influence?) So we may be sure that for such a *rara avis* as a

poet who could sing his own verses, there were triumphs to be snatched in this fervid Irish society, as well as in the grander circles across the Channel, which at the moment of their winning must have seemed more enviable than all the awards of gods and columns. Never was a poet so popular with the gentler sex. Even the Quaker women, with their natural and acquired distaste for the erotic Muse, quite fell in love with him, and paid him the unheard of compliment of soliciting "a line of thine with thy name to it." The women on the Dublin Packet—I think most of them were Irish, however,—kissed him almost to death, on a certain occasion. Small blame to them! The grand dames of the English aristocracy, duchesses and countesses galore, if you care for them—went mad over the Irish Anacreon. Read his Journal if you wish to know how they pursued him with invitations which even Mr. Brummel might have envied before his fatal rupture with George the Admired.

We look back now upon that Era of Sentiment with a curious mixture of contempt and wonder, and the critics have got into a habit of unduly depreciating its literary product. I think I hear these learned gentry exclaim that stories of Tom Moore's strumming and humming have little to do with a serious estimate of the poet. Granted, but to be serious is not wholly our concern; and so I think these testimonies are worth recounting, for they help us to realise in some sort the living magic of that wonderful minstrelsy, the exquisite union of poesy and music in the genius of Thomas Moore.

II

POET AND PATRIOT

THE wise Greeks fabled of one of their poets that, while yet an infant in the cradle, a swarm of bees settled on his lips, attesting the lyric gift with which the Muses had endowed the happy babe. It is easy for

us who have known the spell of that witching Irish minstrelsy, to believe that the fairies did *their* portion at the cradle of Tom Moore. One brought the gift of music, another whispered the strange secret of poesy, and a third fairy that, with the loss of many things, has never left the Green Isle—gave him the infallible recipe of Irish wit. And the fairy that came last was not least, as our poet himself well knew when he wrote—

Wit a diamond brought,
Which cut his bright way through.

Literary fashions have doubtless changed since the early years of the last century when young ladies at boarding school, like Miss Rebecca Sharp and Miss Amelia Sedley, dreamed only of a lover with the "dear Corsair expression, half savage, half soft," and when Moore's Irish Melodies were the reigning favourites in Belgravia and Bloomsbury. Even in this country the strains of the newly awakened harp of Erin were heard, and in-

deed the poet had here preceded his song. We read that the great Mr. Jefferson forgave our poet some sharp iambics,—which Moore's visit to this country in 1803 had elicited,—and that the first of American statesmen often refreshed his leisure with the riper and better work of his critic. We have long since detected the error of taste in the pseudo-Oriental school of English poetry, so greatly the vogue in the first quarter of the last century, but it must fairly be said, that the best critical opinion has varied little, if at all, as to the high and enduring merits of the Irish Melodies. Byron's praise, that they are worth all the epics which have ever been written, may easily be granted a hyperbole; but surely they have added more to the delight of mankind. It was happily said of our poet, that he would go down to posterity with the Rose in his button-hole—the rose of his perfect song, let me say, which receives new beauty and lustre with every gifted voice that is born into the world.

There are poets who have sung to the people, and there are poets who have sung only for poets. These may well be deemed the rarest singers whose every auditor bears himself the laurel and the lyre. It is of one who in his highest moments of rapture sang to both,—poets and people, the vocal and the voiceless,—that I propose to speak in the following pages.

Also it seems needful to say that no poetic fame holds so ardent and secure as that which is entwined with the spirit of an oppressed nationality. The man whom old Fletcher of Saltoun knew was wiser, in our reckoning, than some sages whose names are remembered. For the songs are ever more than the laws of a people.

To him who reads history aright, Rouget de Lisle was a greater general than the victor of Hohenlinden, a mightier conqueror than the Man of Austerlitz. The assemblies that followed the convocation of the States-General of France in the memorable year 1789,

debated the rights of man. History-*making* did not fairly begin until, coming up from the South, the gaunt soldiers of Barbaroux fiercely chanted those rights in the streets of Paris. The greater the measure of tyranny, the more heroic and unconquerable the spirit of an oppressed people, the nobler is the fame and the loftier the inspiration of the poet who feeds the hatred of that tyranny till "time at last sets all things even," and sanctifies the zeal of that spirit unto liberty and regeneration.

And though the greatest poet may be he whose song is poured out for all mankind, yet dearer is the strain breathed to one votive altar of patriotism. The fame of Thomas Moore, like the "light in Kildare's holy fane, which burned thro' long ages of darkness and storm," glows unquenchably in the eternal aspiration of the Irish heart. Not vainly has he sung:—

Dear Harp of my Country! in darkness I found thee,
The cold chain of silence had hung o'er thee long,

When proudly, my own Island Harp, I unbound thee,
And gave all thy chords to light, freedom, and song!
The warm lay of love and the light note of gladness
Have waken'd thy fondest, thy liveliest thrill;
But so oft hast thou echo'd the deep sigh of sadness,
That ev'n in thy mirth it will steal from thee still.

Dear Harp of my Country! farewell to thy numbers,
This sweet wreath of song is the last we shall twine!
Go, sleep with the sunshine of Fame on thy slumbers,
Till touch'd by some hand less unworthy than mine.
If the pulse of the patriot, soldier or lover,
Have throbb'd at our lay, 'tis thy glory alone;
I was but as the wind, passing heedlessly over,
And all the wild sweetness I waked was thy own.

Viewed simply in their relation to literature, we shall easily tolerate even the more violent aspects of Irish patriotism. Because John Mitchel felt strongly he wrote words which hold us yet with a compelling power. Because Clarence Mangan's heart yearned for the Eire of his visions,—

"the clime and land
Of Cáhál-Mór of the wine-red hand,"—

he has gained a place unique among Irish poets. The note of revolt made possible that splendid efflorescence of genius which we call the "New Ireland movement." So the passing of the "force men" from the scene of nationalist endeavour may be regretted on good poetical grounds, even though it be hailed by the lovers of peace (some of whom, it need not be gainsaid, love Ireland too) as a sign of the better era that is always just dawning for the unhappy island. And, truly, in the cold decline of that fervid patriotism which once united the "sea-divided Gael," and which poured itself out in lavish aid of every Fenian plot, of every hare-brained project of liberation or agitation,— in this altered feeling, let me say, may we not fear the progressive decadence and ultimate death of that which has seemed most vital in the Irish character, and which has thrown around the race in its periods of darkest oppression a glory that has ever sustained and exalted the national hope? Consider the

men of 'Forty-eight and the parliamentary patriots of a later day! What a falling off from that high spirit, that unselfish devotion which breathed in the songs of Thomas Davis, sweeping away every barrier before them with the irresistible attack of Celtic genius! What a change from the heroic, if illusory, ideals of patriotism that inspired the clanging speech of Meagher of the Sword! One grows old and the world seems to shrink and fade in thinking of it.

There was something so warm and sublime in the core
Of an Irishman's heart that I envied thy dead!

Alas! the new Irish Avatar is different enough from that which provoked the fierce anger of Byron. It asks for tears rather than condemnation. It signifies an exhausted patriotism; a people still faithful indeed, but weary of promises; more willing than ever to be guided by moderate counsels; no longer breaking out into those sudden fits of rage or frenzy that startled the oppressor in an

earlier day; shaping themselves, as some would say, for the hour when British magnanimity shall endow them with a measure of justice.

III

THE POET'S CENSORS

I KNOW full well there are those who will utterly dissent from my deliberate conviction that Moore ranks with the best and purest patriots of his country. Many have been influenced by the cant which has gathered about the subject, and have been induced to form a judgment as superficial as it is false. Perhaps the true explanation of this prejudice which has ever insidiously sought to withhold the most precious part of our poet's glory, lies deeper. The curse of jealousy and mistrust somehow clings to the most generous and gifted people under the sun. It is the dark thread that runs through all their history of glory and sorrow. Sometimes the national

defect is not without humorous expression, as when Gavan Duffy naïvely tells us that the great O'Connell was never quite able to master his envy of Brian Boru! In very recent years we have seen this racial curse blighting the fame and life itself of the man who, since Henry Grattan, brought his country nearest to the portals of freedom. History has already written her verdict on that great tragedy, but no one deeply acquainted with the Irish character, will take it to be the last example. "How oft has the Banshee cried!"

So, as an Irishman, I regret, while I do not wonder, that it is the fashion among literary men of my own race to disparage the patriotism of Moore. Some of them, indeed, would appear to belittle his poetry, and for the fairest as well as kindliest judgments on both, we must look to un-Irish sources. The centenary of Moore's birth occurred in 1879 and there is not yet an adequate biography of him by an Irish hand. I find, on the contrary, that every petty and unworthy thing which could

be said of him—the small change of malice and envy—has been carefully collected and preserved by Irish chroniclers. His patriotism, which gave to the Irish people a legacy of song that has not its like in literature, has been viciously impugned on no better ground than that his genius, education, wit and social qualities caused him to be honourably courted by the proudest aristocracy in the world. Yet not an iota of proof can be adduced that Moore held this position by the slightest compromise of his always intense but thoroughly reasoned patriotism.

For a literary sign of this national jealousy, note how Father Prout and Dr. Maginn lampooned Moore with less wit than severity, and indeed conducted themselves with a show of something very like blackguardism. There are also hints of the rancour ecclesiastical—referable perhaps to a certain Letter addressed to the Catholics of Dublin, or to the fact that Moore suffered his Protestant wife to bring up their children in the Established

Church—but I pass them by in silence. I may say here that Moore's theology was good enough for the great Archbishop McHale, and he wrote a book in defence of his religion, which may perhaps atone for his compliance with his wife's scruples.

The favourite text with all who cry down Moore's sterling patriotism and disparage the solid worth of his character, is the idle sarcasm attributed to Byron,—"Tommy dearly loves a lord." It is hard to kill the lie in an epigram, but let us at least set against this the tribute of Samuel Carter Hall, who knew our poet well:

"Amid privations and temptations, the allurements of grandeur and the suggestions of poverty, he preserved his self-respect; bequeathing no property, but leaving no debts; having had no testimonial of acknowledgment or reward; seeking none, nay, avoiding any; labouring ardently and honestly for his political faith, but never lending to party what was meant for mankind; proud and

rightly proud of his self-obtained position, but neither scorning nor slighting the humble root from which he sprung."

The learned Dr. Parr in bequeathing a ring to Moore commended his "original genius, independent spirit and incorruptible integrity."

Lord John Russell, the poet's literary executor, who was Premier of England, observed of Moore that "a man who was courted and esteemed by the Marquis of Lansdowne, Mr. Canning, Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Rogers, Sydney Smith, Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron, —must have had social as well as literary merits of no common order." And these words may be taken to convey more than they actually express, since while there is abundant proof of Lord Russell's sincere friendship for the poet, no evidence is lacking that the noble lord utterly mistook his own taste and capacity for the function with which Moore intrusted him.

It is but a truism to say that the world is not in the habit of applying the stern tests of

political or even moral consistency to a great poet. It laughs with Horace over his flight from Philippi,—*relicta non bene parmula.* It smiles indulgently at the trimming of Dryden and easily condones the prostitution of Addison's pen to the purposes of party. Nay, it even compounds the felonies of Villon, that immortal jailbird of old Paris. Therefore, I would gladly hold a brief for Moore on the score of moral or political delinquency, if his critics and censors could make out a case against him. This they cannot do. His religion was, simply, that God is Love. His life was blameless by the ordinary human standards, and nothing in that life was more admirable than his consistent patriotism.

Historians tell us that the Irish Melodies had as large a share as O'Connell's mighty influence in shaping British sentiment for the grant of Catholic emancipation. If this be so, the world has seen nothing like it since the Sicilian conquerors struck the chains from their Greek captives, as told in classic story.

It gives a glory unique to the brow of the Irish poet and ranks him with the benefactors of his race.

I would cite the "Rebuke to the Neapolitans" as marking the strength of Moore's poetical expression and the vigour of his political creed. These verses speak well for the fibre of the man whose patriotism is so often slurred by ill-judging censors of his own race. How many who lightly criticise Moore in his character of patriot know that his "Fables for the Holy Alliance," dedicated to Lord Byron, elicited the threat of a government prosecution? It will easily be granted that John Mitchel, that "last of the patriots," was not a type of the rosewater revolutionist. Yet the patriotism of our poet passed current with Mitchel, who has recorded a significant tribute to the effect of Moore's poetical satires directed against British misgovernment in Ireland. The English critic Hazlitt, who was no lover of our poet, says of these poetic arsenals of wit and sarcasm:—

"He (Moore) has wit at will and of the first quality. His satirical and burlesque poetry is his best; it is first-rate. His light, agreeable and polished style pierces through the body of the court . . . shows up the littleness of the great, and spears a phalanx of statesmen with its glittering point as with a diamond."

Let us not forget that Byron wrote, while the "loyal" Irish people and clergy, with O'Connell at their head, were acclaiming George the Fourth on his visit to the unhappy island—

But if aught in my bosom could quench for an hour
My contempt for a nation which, servile tho' sore,
Which, tho' trod like the worm, will not turn upon power,
'Tis the glory of Grattan, the genius of Moore!

The truth is that Ireland has had few patriots (of anything like equal prominence) so consistent in high principle as her greatest poet. It would be easy to name some, and these eminent enough, who began with a

dream of revolution, and, if they did not attain the dubious distinction of hiding their heads in a coronet (as Sheridan finely said), at least acquired an honourary initial or two, and anchored their old age in the secure Alsatia of political conformity. I do not condemn them. The world may be as often wrong about its heroes as about the victims of its harshest judgments. I simply maintain my position—which to the reader of Irish sympathies should be worth maintaining—that Anacreon Moore was as sound a patriot as the Green Island has over produced, not barring the great O'Connell, or even the justly lamented Brian Boru.

IV

THE LYRIST

MOORE has long overpassed his century, and he remains one of the most popular of poets. I shall presume to set forth my own humble views touching the value of

his work, the sources of its unfading charm, and the rank which he seems destined to hold in literature.

In the first place, then, he is the prince of English lyrists. In poetry we require the miracle, says Emerson. To my mind the best of Moore's lyrics never fail to fulfil this condition. Our literature has nothing to compare with their distinctive grace, tenderness, pathos and joy,—and the singer himself "singing as if he never could grow old." The only adequate description of these songs must be sought in themselves, with the heart-searching commentary of their own music.

> Music, oh how faint, how weak
> Language fades before thy spell!
> Why should Feeling ever speak
> When thou canst breathe her soul so well?

It would not be easy, indeed, to account for the singular superiority of Moore as a lyrical poet—a superiority often only to be felt, not put into words—without the clue which his

gifts of music supply. He had, as Balfe * the composer testifies, an endowment of music peculiarly his own; a delicacy of ear rarely found even among professed *virtuosi,* which, with his exquisite poetical genius, enabled him to make such adaptation of verse to melody as had never been known before, and, as the highest artistic achievement in kind, is not likely to be repeated. He himself tells us: "I only know that in a strong and inborn feeling for music lies the source of whatever talent I may have shown for poetical composition; and that it was the effort to translate into language the emotions and passions which music appeared to me to express, that first led to my writing any poetry at all deserving of the name."

But, after all, I regard Moore's gift of music as merely supplementary to his poetical endowment. During his life, indeed, it counted for much more than would be considered in a critical estimate of his work to-day. A cloud

* Author of "The Bohemian Girl," etc.

of witnesses, many of them among the brightest names of the last century, record the charm and delight of the poet's own singing. Byron pointed out that "Moore has a peculiarity of talent, or rather, talents,—poetry, music, voice, all his own, and an expression in each which never was or will be possessed by another." No one could hope to write songs like Moore, he said. Shelley proudly confessed his inferiority to Moore, and happily called him "the sweetest lyrist of Ierne's saddest wrong." And glorious old Kit North (Prof. John Wilson) with a generosity rare in a Scotchman, admitted that "of all the song-writers that ever warbled or chanted or sung, the best, in our estimation, is verily none other than Thomas Moore." Coleridge allowed that Moore had written more beautiful lyrics than any poet who had ever lived. "It would be a delightful addition to life," wrote the great Walter Scott, after a visit from our Irish song bird, "if Thomas Moore had a cottage within two miles of me." And the poet's gifted coun-

tryman, Samuel Lover, fitly described the Irish Melodies as "that work, not only the crowning wreath of its author, but among the glories of the land which gave him birth."

The purest and most perfect, then, of Moore's lyrics can be fully interpreted only through the medium of their own Irish music.—

> Sweet air, how every note brings back
> Some sunny hope, some day-dream bright
> That shining o'er life's early track,
> Filled even its tears with light.

The secret of Moore is in these perfect lines, a secret that I believe died with him. This truth, that the poetry of the Melodies is rightly inseparable from the music,—a truth little appreciated by the casual reader, has led our poet to say:

"Accustomed as I have always been to consider my songs as a sort of compound creations, in which the music forms no less essential a part than the verses, it is with a feeling which I can hardly expect my un-lyrical read-

ers to understand, that I see such a swarm of songs as crowd these pages all separated from the beautiful airs which have formed, hitherto, their chief ornament and defence—their *decus et tutamen*. . . . Those occasional breaches of the laws of rhythm which the task of adapting words to airs demands of the poet, though frequently one of the happiest results of his skill, become blemishes when the verse is separated from the melody."

Yet I would point out that, rich as are the Irish lyrics, divested of the harmonies with which they are endued by the genius of that unrivalled music, it is thus we may better appreciate the poetic miracle, unheightened by the spell of that kindred art to which our poet owed so much of his inspiration.

I have already given my estimate of Moore's sterling patriotism—it actually seems a good Irish bull that the author of the Melodies should require a character in this respect —and I have noted the bad taste of some of his scribbling countrymen in aspersing the

motives of a man who might have commanded the riches of the great and honoured, yet died in a simple poverty, leaving, as was said, neither wealth nor debts behind him.

In this little poem the national fate, the Evil Genius of Ireland, usually invoked by historians to point the moral of her sad history, is touched with words that burn as they fall from the poet's pen:

Weep on, weep on, your hour is past,
  Your dreams of pride are o'er;
The fatal chain is round you cast,
  And you are men no more.
In vain the hero's heart hath bled,
  The sage's tongue hath warned in vain:
Oh, Freedom! once thy flame hath fled,
  It never lights again!

Weep on,—perhaps in after days,
  They'll learn to love your name;
While many a deed may wake in praise,
  That long hath slept in blame.
And when they tread the ruin'd Isle
  Where rest at length the lord and slave,

They'll wondering ask, how hands so vile
Could conquer hearts so brave.

"'Twas fate," they'll say, "a wayward fate
"Your web of discord wove;
"And while your tyrants joined in hate,
"You never joined in love:
"But hearts fell off, that ought to twine,
"And man profaned what God had given,
"Till some were heard to curse the shrine
"Where others knelt to heaven!"

Nothing in the history of the Irish people is so remarkable as their attachment to the faith which Patrick gave them. They have clung to it as even a more precious thing than liberty itself, and indeed there are not wanting historians to tell us that in rejecting the Reformation,* the Irish people ignorantly threw away their chance of national salvation. However that may be—and there is really not much room to dispute it—the world must yield its tribute of admiration to such heroic constancy. It is this high sentiment of un-

* Rejecting it from England, *bien entendu.*

changed and unchangeable devotion that breathes in one of the noblest of the Melodies, "The Irish Peasant to His Mistress,"—signifying allegorically the ancient faith of Ireland, and summing up in a few lines the story of ages of persecution.

Through grief and through danger thy smile hath cheer'd my way,
Till hope seemed to bud from each thorn that round me lay;
The darker our fortune, the brighter our pure love burned,
Till shame into glory, till fear into zeal was turned;
Yes, slave as I was, in thy arms my spirit felt free,
And bless'd even the sorrows that made thee more dear to me.

Thy rival was honor'd while thou wert wrong'd and scorn'd,
Thy crown was of briers, while gold her brows adorn'd;
She woo'd me to temples while thou lay'st hid in caves,
Her friends were all masters, while thine, alas, were slaves;
Yet cold in the earth, at thy feet, I would rather be,
Than wed what I loved not, or turn one thought from thee!

They slander thee sorely who say thy vows are frail—
Hadst thou been a false one thy cheek had been less pale.
They say, too, so long thou hast worn those lingering chains,
That deep in thy heart they have printed their servile stains.
Oh! foul is the slander—no chain could that soul subdue—
Where shineth thy spirit, there liberty shineth too!

The beauty of Moore's similes, springing up ever new, like the almond flower in the Eastern legend, is, after the music of his verse, his most distinctive excellence. No other poet is so happy and rich in this the rarest treasure-trove of poetic fancy. "I had rather have a new symbol for my thought," says Emerson, "than the suffrage of Kant or Plato." Moore has hardly a verse without a simile, and he never rides a jaded metaphor.

An admirable instance is furnished by the following Irish Melody, which we shall search the more deeply for the secret of its beauty and charm that we know it to have been a prime favourite of Lord Byron's.

As a beam o'er the face of the waters may glow,
While the tide runs in darkness and coldness, below,
So the cheek may be tinged with a warm sunny smile,
Tho' the cold heart to ruin runs darkly the while.

One fatal remembrance, one sorrow that throws
Its bleak shade alike o'er our joys and our woes,
To which life nothing darker or brighter can bring,
For which joy has no balm and affliction no sting—

Oh! this thought in the midst of enjoyment will stay
Like a dead, leafless branch in the summer's bright ray;
The beams of the warm sun play round it in vain,
It may smile in his light, but it blooms not again.

Even his prose sparkles with this sort of ornament, though one feels sometimes that it were better reserved for his poetry. In this, one of the most delicate and beautiful of Irish love songs, the poet plays with his images,—one in every line—as if such rare Parnassian mintings were the current coin of all rhymers.

Lesbia hath a beaming eye,
  But no one knows from whom it beameth;
Right and left its arrows fly,
  But what they aim at no one dreameth.

Sweeter 'tis to gaze upon
My Nora's lid that seldom rises;
Few its looks, but every one,
Like unexpected light, surprises!

Oh, my Nora Creina, dear,
My gentle, bashful Nora Creina,
Beauty lies
In many eyes,
But love in yours, my Nora Creina.

Lesbia wears a robe of gold,
But all so close the nymph hath laced it,
Not a charm of beauty's mould
Presumes to stay where Nature placed it.
Oh! my Nora's gown for me,
That floats as wild as mountain breezes,
Leaving every beauty free
To sink or swell as Heaven pleases.

Yes, my Nora Creina, dear,
My simple, graceful Nora Creina,
Nature's dress
Is loveliness—
The dress you wear, my Nora Creina.

Lesbia hath a wit refined,
  But when its points are gleaming round us,
Who can tell if they're designed
  To dazzle merely, or to wound us?
Pillow'd on my Nora's heart
  In safer slumber Love reposes—
Bed of peace! whose roughest part
  Is but the crumpling of the roses.

Oh, my Nora Creina, dear,
My mild, my artless Nora Creina!
Wit, though bright,
Hath no such light
As warms your eyes, my Nora Creina!

I am aware of a certain literary prejudice against mere song-writing, but, though Moore has suffered from it, especially in the present generation, it in no way justly applies to him. Before he came the songs were made for the sound and never aimed at the sense, poetical or otherwise. It remained for him who has been called the "Rossini of musicians and the humming bird of poets," to bring to the art of the song-writer powers, I had almost said,

unmatched before in poetry, and a musical feeling and perception so refined as to evade the analysis of words.

They called him Bacchus in his brilliant prime, his fine head with its clustering tendrils and his lustrous eyes alive with the fires of genius, suggesting a likeness to the classic deity of mirth and good fellowship no less than his drinking songs, which I take to be the finest in the world. In these "short swallow flights" of lyric song Moore has never been approached for lightness of touch, felicity of phrase, and that liquid flow of versification, at once metre and music, of which he alone among poets possessed the secret. To these virtues and qualities may be added such an expression of the festive spirit, classic without being coarse, Bacchanalian without running into excess, which is also a peculiar attribute of Moore's. The delighted reader,—or better, hearer, for these poems should always be *sung* in order to be felt at their full value, yields willingly to the seductive spell of the

minstrel, credulous even to believe and follow when the latter promises him—

"We'll take a flight to Heaven to-night
And leave dull earth behind us!"

There are no happier examples of Moore's unrivalled genius as a song-writer than these lyrics of a refined conviviality, but I shall not cite any of them here,—I choose rather to show him in graver mood, a mood which is often ignorantly or invidiously denied to his scope as an artist. The poem—the song—is such as only Moore could have written.

Oh, banquet not in those shining bowers
Where Youth resorts, but come to me:
For mine's a garden of faded flowers,
More fit for sorrow, for age and thee.
And there we shall have our feasts of tears,
And many a cup in silence pour:
Our guests, the shades of former years,
Our toasts, to lips that bloom no more.

There, while the myrtle's withering boughs
Their lifeless leaves around us shed,

We'll brim the bowl to broken vows,
To friends long lost, the changed, the dead.
Or while some blighted laurel waves
Its branches o'er the dreary spot,
We'll drink to those neglected graves
Where valor sleeps, unnamed, forgot.

Joyous as was that spirit, its tenderness and sensibility were yet true to the mother that bore him. The sadness native to the true Irish temperament is like the haunting pathos of those wonderful melodies, breathing in the most frolic moment of the near-by fountain of tears. So perfect is the marriage of Moore's verse to the music of his country that the sub-note of sorrow in the one is instantly struck in the other, as if they were both of a birth, twinned in the same soul and inspiration.

Such devotion coupled with such genius could not fail to achieve the most precious results. In the present estate of political sentiment with regard to Ireland, in the apathy with which her fortunes are regarded by too

many of her kin in this country, in the apparent decay of the national hope "at home"—a phrase no longer intelligible—one cannot read over these poems, full of fresh and passionate aspiration, without a feeling of wonder at the intensity of that patriotism which alas! seems destined to pass into a tradition.* Yet, in one of his highest moments of power and prophecy, our poet forbids such a thought:

Like the bright lamp that shone in Kildare's holy fane,
And burn'd thro' long ages of darkness and storm,
Is the heart that sorrows have frown'd on in vain,
Whose spirit outlives them, unfading and warm.
Erin, oh Erin, thus bright thro' the tears
Of a long night of bondage, thy spirit appears.

The nations have fallen, and thou still art young,
Thy sun is but rising when others are set;
And tho' slavery's cloud o'er thy morning hath hung,
The full noon of freedom shall beam round thee yet!

*This was written some years ago:—the present moment is more hopeful.

V

LALLA ROOKH

I NOW pass to a consideration of the most elaborate poetical work which Moore has given us—the wide-famed and variously judged and misjudged "Lalla Rookh." One of the wisest men of this country, whose literary judgments are declared to be without appeal, has written: "The test or measure of poetic genius is the power to read the poetry of affairs—to fuse the circumstances of to-day. I know there is entertainment and room for talent in the artist's selection of ancient or remote subjects; as when the poet goes to India, or to Rome, or Persia, for his fable. But I believe nobody knows better than he that herein he consults his ease rather than his strength or his desire."

This truth is better apprehended to-day than it was in the epoch which gave to a ravished world such productions as "The Giaour" and

"Lalla Rookh"; and it is this which, if I may be allowed the phrase, discounts the value of the most strenuous work of Moore's creative faculty. Perhaps Taine touches the point more acutely where he intimates that Moore was not pantheistical enough to wear the singing robes of Firdousi. It is a strange fact in literature that the things which one writer neglects as unfit material, may be employed by another to that vital purpose which is the enduring life of art in any of its forms. In the beautiful English country, where the Irish poet had fixed his home, lay most of those sources of thought and inspiration from which Tennyson was to draw the sustaining food of a more exquisitely true and natural poetry than had yet been written. But the talking oak had no message for the ears of the Minstrel of Tara; the brook babbled for him no secrets worthy to flow on forever in the thoughts of men. Philip's farm was like any one of a dozen about Sloperton; but our poet looked on it with alien eyes.

Moore had no mind to ponder the poetic possibilities of a dusty English miller, nor would he give a sigh to the miller's daughter who

> —"is grown so dear, so dear,
> That I would be the jewel that trembles at her ear."

Indeed he had married his Irish Bessie before ever he knew Wilts or Derbyshire. Yet it seems certain that Lady Clara Vere de Vere was on his visiting list—how could he escape her and she the daughter of a hundred earls! . . .

All this is not to disparage "Lalla Rookh," of which indeed I am too fond to attempt a critical estimate. Considered merely as verse-building, imagery—without reference to true and deep spiritualities—most modern English metre shows poor and crude beside the gorgeous Arabesque of the Irish poet's fancy. Moore has out-Persianed the Persian: compared to him, Hafiz is a child lisping in numbers; Firdousi shames the Orient that has literally adopted the foreign changeling in his stead; the Irish thrush has deceived the world

with its mock notes borrowed from the bulbul of the enchanted gardens.

It was a wonderful feat, but looking back over the completed literary cycle, we see that Moore might have turned his powers to better account. "Lalla Rookh" is a charming romance whose gossamer web, shot with the splendours of the Orient, a child may blow away with its breath. Its passion seldom convinces, and, in spite of the amazing industry of the poet, too much in evidence, its fidelity to sentiment and scene is always in question. Six months in the East would have served Moore better than all his books of reference. But in that event it is possible that "Lalla Rookh" would never have been written,—a contingency which you and I would not care to contemplate. Tricked out as it is with all the graces and seductions of a bayadere, it may not bear comparison with the severe masterpieces of English verse.

Vastly more ingenuity and resource and poetical talent were expended upon "Lalla

Rookh" than are shown in Fitzgerald's paraphrase of Omar, yet the poem of the Rubaiyat is in some quarters critically esteemed to bear the palm by virtue of its more convincing orientalism.

Beautiful then, as "Lalla Rookh" is, with measures that seem naturally adapted to music—the four long poems of which it is made up, have been called four extended Irish Melodies, which is not quite just to the Melodies —it does not offer such food to the spirit as "In Memoriam"; it does not stimulate the thought like the best cantos of "Childe Harold," or the nobler effort of Wordsworth.

Obviously this is a mixing of opposites, but the greatest poem must be that which claims the suffrage of the highest human interest; and it is in the latter works cited we shall find the ranking quality denied to "Lalla Rookh." Yet the world is not always willing to accept so stern a poetical canon. If, as was believed of old, the birth of a poet be a joy to the world, might not the world soon

turn the joy into a curse by imposing such conditions as would fetter the wings of the poetic soul and cast a baulking spell across the rare moments of fullest inspiration? Moore himself has delightfully anticipated such criticism by putting it into the mouth of his *Fadladeen*—and I may say that I think better of *Fadladeen* than of some others, his poetical *personae*.

It is not easy to offer extracts from "Lalla Rookh," for the reason that too much of it tempts quotation. I may ask your indulgence while I mark a few passages where the thrush and the bulbul sing one note, and that the note of beauty and rapture which men have agreed to call poetry.

The chief reproach which the critics bring against our poet is, humorously enough, that he has a seemingly inexhaustible store of that poetical capital of which less gifted rhymesters are deuced glad to have a very small portion,—namely, fancy, felicity of illustration and that happiness of spirit, that divine con-

fidence, by which the poet is enabled to rise unto the pure ether. "Paradise and the Peri" exemplifies this fortunate estate of the poet as I believe does no other poem in the English tongue. It is so familiar to us all that I may not quote,—yet I beg for this one glorious piece of descriptive verse in which are assembled such images of beauty as give a dazzling richness to the lines, and which, it is pleasing to remember (in spite of Taine and Emerson) have been hailed as native to the East:—

Now upon Syria's land of roses
Softly the light of Eve reposes,
And, like a glory, the broad sun
Hangs over sainted Lebanon;
Whose head in wintry grandeur tow'rs
And whitens with eternal sleet,
While summer in a vale of flow'rs,
Is sleeping rosy at his feet.

To one who looked from upper air
O'er all the enchanted region there,
How beauteous must have been the glow,
The life, the sparkling from below!

Fair gardens, shining streams, with ranks
Of golden melons on their banks,
More golden where the sunlight falls;—
Gay lizards, glittering on the walls
Of ruined shrines, busy and bright,
As they were all alive with light;
And yet, more splendid, numerous flocks
Of pigeons settling on the rocks,
With their rich restless wings, that gleam
Variously in the crimson beam
Of the warm West,—as if inlaid
With brilliants from the mine, or made
Of tearless rainbows, such as span
The unclouded skies of Peristan.
And then the mingling sounds that come
Of shepherd's ancient reed, with hum
Of the wild bees of Palestine,
Banqueting through the flow'ry vales;
And, Jordan, those sweet banks of thine,
And woods so full of nightingales.

The poem of "The Fire Worshippers," in which Moore receives an access of earnestness from identifying the cause of Mithra with the unconquered national spirit of Ireland—Iran

is easily read Erin—is critically esteemed the best in "Lalla Rookh." It was honoured with the preference of Lord Byron, who himself liked a good story in verse better than he could or would tell it. Certainly the poet is here in thorough touch with his theme, and if there be objection to Hafed as a scarcely disguised Fenian, we are not disposed to quarrel with the inconsistency, since on this very account Moore writes with intense feeling, which is usually the mother of good poetry. The whole story is finely imagined, and the catastrophe worked out with a high degree of dramatic strength and skill.

I shall cite only a few lines from this, the finest work of Moore's creative power. Hinda is thus described, yet beautifully as it is done, I fancy Byron knew his fair pagan better when he gave us Haidee:

> Light as the angel shapes that bless
> An infant's dream, yet not the less
> Rich in all woman's loveliness;—
> With eyes so pure, that from their ray

Dark Vice would turn abash'd away,
Blinded like serpents when they gaze
Upon the em'rald's virgin blaze;—
Yet fill'd with all youth's sweet desires,
Mingling the meek and vestal fires
Of other worlds with all the bliss,
The fond, weak tenderness of this.

Poetry more chaste is not frequent in the anthologies, but it leaves Hinda a lovely abstraction. We think of Haidee's

Short upper lip—sweet lips that make us sigh
E'er to have seen such;

and of that ominous fact in her brief story of love and passion—

Her mother was a Moorish maid from Fez
Where all is Allah—or a wilderness!

In "The Light of the Harem" our Poet illustrates the musical possibilities of the English language more happily perhaps than he has done in any other poem—save, of course, the Irish lyrics. It is pure joy, sheer wanton-

ness of delightful fancy. Every line sings itself. Compare it with some of the standard things that are dubbed poetry by the schoolmen, and the brain aches out of sympathy. But "Lalla Rookh" has already detained me too long, and I must content myself with these few exquisite lines in which the poet naïvely, yet truly, describes the charm of his own verse:

> For mine is the lay that lightly floats,
> And mine are the murmuring, dying notes
> That fall as soft as snow on the sea,
> And melt in the wave as instantly;—
> And the passionate strain that, deeply going,
> Refines the bosom it trembles through,
> As the musk-wind, over the water blowing,
> Ruffles the wave, but sweetens it too.

I wonder if the lightness of this frolic fancy, wantoning in images of roses and wine, this poet of Love's summer heaven, will ever cease to be admirable among men. And yet the Dryasdusts who presume to sit in judgment on these delicate creations which, for any-

thing like an adequate likeness of similar excellence, beggar the whole antecedent tribe of rhymers, will dismiss them for you with a wave of the hand as "light" poetry. Light indeed! As if dulness and heaviness were not the curse of the human intellect, and it were a reproach that our Irish Ariel alone escapes it!

I may not dismiss the subject of "Lalla Rookh" without a word on "The Loves of the Angels," which nearly followed the more famous Orientalism in point of time, and is not greatly inferior to it in the essentials of poetical performance. But, although the poem cannot be pronounced a failure, it is evident that Moore had taken his pitcher once too often to the well of Eastern legend. Besides, the conditions of composition were different. "Lalla Rookh" was created, as the poet tells us, amid the snows of two or three Derbyshire winters. The "Loves" was written during a pleasant exile, amid overmuch distraction, at Paris. The result proves that even a poet who

seems to have been made for society, had sometimes to take off his door-knocker and be at home to none but the Muses.

VI

HIS PROSE

OF Moore's works in prose I have not room to speak at length, but some of them are of deservedly high reputation and will live as long as his poetry. One is moved to wonder how he was able to do such a mass of work and to do it so well—he was always singularly thorough and painstaking—and still give so much of himself to the pleasing exactions of fashionable society. Well might he sing:—

> They may rail at this life—from the hour I began it,
> I've found it a world full of kindness and bliss;
> And until they can show me some happier planet,
> More social and bright, I'll content me with this.

But his biographer, Lord John Russell,

bids us take note that the poet did not allow his social tastes to interfere with the business of authorship. There were for him in every year long periods of rest, thought and study at his Sloperton retreat, and from these retirements came the fruit of his more earnest labour.

Among the prose works of Moore the Life of Byron seems to me the most important. So eminent a critic as Macaulay ranks it with the finest prose compositions which any age has produced. The singular good taste with which Moore executed this task, touching himself at so many points; the courage and manliness which he evinced in the trying relations produced by the noble poet's trust, and the final judgment which the world, at first inclined to impugn his motives, has pronounced on the whole affair—render it the proudest as it is the most remarkable episode in Moore's literary career.

"The Epicurean" done in poetic prose, has been called the "highest and best sustained

flight in the regions of pure romance." I think it smells a little too much of the lamp, but it is surely a most finished piece of work, with passages of great beauty and eloquence. Perhaps I ought to be ashamed to confess that I find a more genuine pleasure in reading that delightful fragment which even the sly historian of the abbeys of Touraine might have envied—"The Chapter of the Blanket." The Lives of Sheridan and Lord Edward Fitzgerald are not proposed as perfect models of biography, neither are they of merely mediocre value. The "Sheridan" is enriched with some of Moore's most brilliant prose and the Life of Lord Edward does justice to a beautiful and heroic character. I have never been able to read Moore's History of Ireland, and I suspect the poet had not much natural fitness for the task. But his glory appears to me the more genuine that we are able to score an occasional failure against him.

As a reviewer Moore set a far higher mark than as a historian. Mr. Richard Henry

Stoddard declares himself amazed at the cleverness of Moore's critical papers and the immense versatility of their author. "His contributions to *The Edinburgh Review,*" says the American scholar, "were astonishingly good of their kind; critically acute, thoroughly learned and politically sagacious." Mr. Richard Herne Shepherd, the competent English critic, allots our poet an honourable place in the brilliant constellation of contributors which the famous *Review* numbered in those years—Sydney Smith, Brougham, Macaulay, Carlyle, Hallam, and Jeffrey himself. These are splendid testimonies to the intellectual calibre of a man who is often ignorantly put down as a mere trifler in poetry—a writer of *vers de société.*

The visit which our poet made to America in 1803, when he was a young man of twenty-four, gave birth to some very keen poetical satire touching social and political conditions in this country, for which the biographers of Moore are in the habit of offering apology.

It does not seem to me that the incident is of much moment. Moore was honestly shocked at some things which he saw in the infant Republic, and there is no reason to doubt that he honestly reported his impressions. He was little more than a boy in years, and he lived to see the Republic grow great in spite of the evils which attended its early foundation. Be it remembered that a generation afterward there were American poets whom the brutalities of slavery roused to as fierce a pitch of moral indignation—if not to as telling literary purpose—as the author of these spirited lines:

> Oh! Freedom! Freedom! how I hate thy cant!
> Not Eastern bombast, not the savage rant
> Of purpled madmen, were they numbered all
> From Roman Nero down to Russian Paul,
> Could grate upon my ear, so mean, so base,
> As the rank jargon of that factious race,
> Who, poor of heart and prodigal of words,
> Formed to be slaves, yet struggling to be lords,
> Strut forth as patriots, from their negro marts,
> And shout for rights, with rapine in their hearts!

Speaking as a humble student of literature, I am rather glad than otherwise that Moore's feelings were excited to such excellent poetical effect. Bad politics is always a thing easier mended than bad poetry. If our poet had not been disillusioned of some of his dreams—as Charles Dickens professed to be some thirty odd years later—he would have kept his temper and would probably not have risen, poetically, above the elegant trifling of most of these American pieces.

Before leaving the American episode it is proper to set down here the memorable words which the poet wrote many years afterward, recalling the storm of censure that his criticisms had provoked: "The good will I have experienced from more than one distinguished American sufficiently assures me that any injustice I may have done to that land of freemen, if not long since wholly forgotten, is remembered only to be forgiven."

VII

CRITICAL DEPRECIATION

SINCE the foregoing pages were written, I have turned over the "Treasury of Irish Poetry," edited by Stopford A. Brooke and T. W. Rolleston, and it is but fair to say, a compilation admirable in most respects. I should, however, like to mark some exception to Mr. Brooke's disparaging estimate of Moore.

To speak with due candour, the worst thing in this book of Irish poetry is the Rev. Mr. Brooke's prose Had that been omitted, or, at least, the section dealing critically with Moore, the present anthology would offer no serious blemish. Mr. Brooke is a distinctly minor poet himself, as this collection bears evidence, but as a critic and commentator, he is not without honour; and in a long life of literary plodding it is only fair to say that he has done some respectable work.

It is true also that he is not without feeling for Irish poetry; many of his observations in the preface to this volume are in a high degree illuminating. But in his treatment of the largest figure in Irish poetical literature (who is also a true world-poet), he reveals all the one-sidedness of a small-beer critic. In his attempted belittling of Moore he offers nothing new, and there is a note of personal acerbity in his writing which is difficult to understand, except on the trite theory that the mere critic who cannot create literature usually hates the man who can. Allowance should also be made for the fact that Mr. Brooke is an Irishman—an observation not in the least enigmatical, in view of certain painful truths already touched upon.

"No one dreams," says the Rev. Mr. Brooke,—"of comparing Moore with the greater men, or of giving his poetry too important a place in the history of English song; but the man whose work Byron frankly admired, whom Scott did not dispraise, who

received letters of thanks and appreciation from readers in America, Europe and Asia; who fulfilled Matthew Arnold's somewhat foolish criterion of greatness by being known and accepted on the Continent; whom the Italians, French, Germans, Russians, Swedes and Dutch translated; whose 'Lalla Rookh' was partly put into Persian and became the companion of Persians in their travels and in the streets of Ispahan; to whom publishers like Longmans gave three thousand pounds for a poem before they had even seen it—as a tribute to reputation already acquired—*cannot surely be treated with the indifferent contempt which some have lavished upon him.*"

I have italicised the last quoted words in order the more strongly to mark the dishonesty of Mr. Brooke's critical method. Here he would have you believe he is making a great show of liberality before he proceeds to his own inept and unwarranted disparagement of Moore.

Mr. Brooke is at least a practised literary hand, with a good share of the knowledge that goes with the craft. One is therefore surprised to find him guilty of such a stroke of bungling malice as the statement that Scott *did not dispraise* Moore! Is not Sir Walter's Journal open to us as to the Rev. Brooke? Do we not read therein the noble Scot's tribute to the Irish lyrist—to that union of genius, versatility and learning, the most brilliant with the most solid parts, which astonished Byron—and on many a page the record of his sincere friendship and profound admiration?

But pray, Mr. Brooke, what critic of decent reputation ever ventured to treat Moore with indifferent contempt? Did Jeffrey or Gifford, did Hazlitt or Macaulay? Was he not loved and admired by Sydney Smith and Dr. Parr—by even the captious Leigh Hunt and the learned Mackintosh? How were those acute and powerful minds deceived since it falls to Stopford Brooke to assign

Moore his true status in literature?

Mr. Brooke emits the invidious opinion that Moore's "poetry is the translation of music into as pretty and melodious words as possible." "Music was first, and poetry followed," observes Mr. Brooke; and he adds, with seeming profundity, "This is not the case with a great poet."

The truth is, Moore's unexampled blend of musical and poetical genius has confounded the critics. Pragmatical persons like the Rev. Brooke resent the intrusion into Moore's work of a quality with which they know not how to deal, and yet which, in some indefinable way, imparts a most rare and distinctive excellence to his poetry. It never seems to occur to such myopic critics that Moore's gift of music supplies a clue to his singular superiority as a lyrical poet. Yet the poet himself puts the clue into their hands, for he tells us, as I have already quoted: "I only know that in a strong and inborn feeling for music lies the source of whatever talent I may have

shown for poetical composition, and that it was the effort to translate into language the emotions and passions which music appeared to me to express, that first led to my writing any poetry at all deserving of the name."

Of course, we should have expected the shallow Brooke to tell us that Moore had fancy, but no imagination. This is one of the stock criticisms formulated against him by writers who are incapable of appreciating the poet's genius. Like Heine, the Irish poet had too much fancy,—so they allege! "I have myself experienced what such critics say," remarks Heine; "the fowl stands upon one leg and clucks that the singer has no soul; the turkey-cock gobbles that he has no earnestness; the dove coos that he does not know true love; the goose cackles that he is not sufficiently wise; the capon chirps that he is not moral; the wren twitters that he, alas! has no religion; the sparrow pipes that he is not prolific enough; lapwings, magpies, owls, all these croak, chirp and chatter."

The Brooke babbles that Moore has no depth!

But at least he had fancy—that is conceded as a species of reproach to our unrivalled Irish Ariel. Now this very quality is almost wholly lacking in English verse, and Moore is hated and disparaged for possessing so much of it. By this gift of fancy, as Lord Byron finely said, he proved his Oriental descent better than the most zealous of his country's antiquarians. Moore is the most French of all the English writers, says Taine—a remark easily interpreted. And it is for this reason Moore "stands curiously alone,"—to quote Mr. Brooke's invidious phrase,—not because he failed of imaginative power, but rather because in his peculiar province he has not a serious rival.

We do not now regard the Miltonic dumps as a great proof of imagination—at least Taine did not—and we are very sure that dulness and heaviness are the clogging curse of the human intellect, never more thoroughly

naturalised than in the English literary atmosphere. Upon the ground that Moore is never dull or heavy (and therefore never English) critics like the Rev. Brooke have indicted him for lack of imagination.

It will not be disputed that Edgar Allan Poe was a better poet than the Rev. Stopford Brooke, and at least as good a critic. I beg to quote here what he says concerning this hackneyed stricture upon Moore:

"It has been the fashion of late days to deny Moore imagination, while granting him fancy —a distinction originating with Coleridge, than whom no man more fully comprehended the great powers of Moore. The fact is that the fancy of this poet so far predominated over all his other faculties, and over the fancy of all other men, as to have induced very naturally the idea that he is fanciful only.

"But never was there a greater mistake; never was a grosser wrong done the fame of a true poet. In the compass of the English language I can call to mind no poem more

profound or more weirdly imaginative, in the best sense, than the lines commencing, 'I would I were by that dim lake,' which are the composition of Thomas Moore."

Mr. Brooke thinks that he scores profoundly against Moore when he intimates that the latter neglected, as a source of poetical inspiration, the fairies and leprechauns so much in favour with the neo-Celtic school of latter-day poets. Be it understood that I greatly admire the work of these poets, and especially the delicate, mystical genius of Yeats, the most authentic voice among them all. But I venture to submit, the neo-Celts have not yet given us better poetry than Moore's; and, charming as their poetry often is, I do not suppose it will ever drive the Melodies out of favour.

VIII

A FAMOUS DUEL

THAT the Muse of Literary History likes her joke was pretty well established even before she dismissed Moore and Jeffrey from their grey goose quills to do battle on the field of honour. Shall we cry alas! with Burke, over the decline of chivalry? For it is too certain that the spirit which once presided over these affairs is gone out,—"with sighing sent,"—and the uncanny elf that we are calling, in this evil latter time, the Spirit of Commercialism, is come in. Poets do not now challenge their critics to mortal combat. Nay, your poet knows a trick worth two of that, being to-day primarily a man of business, shrewdly aware that the "chorus of indolent reviewers" can do him no greater damage than to advertise his works. For the commercialist is keeping literary shop. Criticism is become a parrot cry. Parnassus is

covered with bizarre inscriptions, like an American landscape. Even the sad consolation of Æneas is denied to us who would fain hope for better things—

O passi graviora dabit deus his quoque finem!

Tom Moore, although a very small man physically—Theodore Hook savagely described him as a cross between a toad and a cupid—was a firm believer in the code duello. More than thirty years after his bloodless encounter with Jeffrey, the American Willis reports for us a conversation at Lady Blessington's in London, in which the poet reaffirmed the fire-eating principles of his youth.

In spite of Moore's pacific character, there is no doubt that he was always ready, upon due occasion, to call out and even pink an adversary on the field of honour. We may be glad that his courage was only once put to so mortal a proof. It is not easy to overcome the comic suggestion of "Anacreon Moore" with a pistol, ready to go off, like a premature ode,

before its appointed time, and tolerably certain—such is the genius of accident—to wound something more palpable than the "casing air."

Our poet had so keen a perception of the ludicrous that I half suspect him of laughing slyly with us over that which is portentously set down in his diary as "Particulars of My Hostile Meeting with Jeffrey in the year 1806." The great Jeffrey, whose once famous and dreaded criticisms refuse to read like literature to-day, had gone so far as to accuse the poet of a purpose to corrupt the morals of youth, in some of his earlier amatory pieces, written over the pen-name of Thomas Little. Even my Lord Byron, whose chaste muse was yet to produce "Beppo" and "Don Juan," mingled his censure with that of the Edinburgh reviewer:

> Who, in soft guise, surrounded by a choir
> Of virgins melting, not with Vesta's fire?
> 'Tis Little, young Catullus of his day.

Nothing better fixes the status of Jeffrey than his absurd criticism upon the amorous breathings of Moore. Truth is, the poetry upon which it was founded is marked by the utter absence of anything like real passion. Moore was merely platonising, and the impractical, rather than unpoetical, Jeffrey charged him with a devilish lubricity. The affair should have ended in a laugh, instead of a duel. It ended in both, and there are some echoes of that laughter yet lingering in the eternal shades.

However, Moore was hot for a deadly reprisal, and, by the hand of his trusty, though eccentric, friend, Hume, he dispatched to Jeffrey a fiery cartel, demanding a plenary apology, or that condign satisfaction which one gentleman is bound to accord another, etc. It may be conceived that Jeffrey—a slight, bookish man, with a Scotch melancholy—had no taste for this business; but there was clearly no evading it. The Muses were bent on a mortal arbitrament, and

hastened on the preliminaries. "We had agreed," says Moore, "that it would not be prudent for me to sleep at home (for fear of the constabulary, no doubt), and as Hume was not the man, either then or at any other period of his life, to be able to furnish a friend with a clean pair of sheets, I took the sheets off my own bed, and, holding them up as well as I could, bore them away with us in the coach."

Arrived at Chalk Farm bright and early, the two famous principals saw each other for the first time. Such is the futility of paper warfare that Jeffrey afterward said he liked Moore from the first glimpse he had of him. "The first words I recollect to have passed between us," says Moore—and what effort of drollery could better this naïve description—"was Jeffrey's observing, on our being left alone together, 'what a beautiful morning it is.' 'Yes,' I answered with a slight smile—(note that smile on the roguish Irish mouth)—'a morning made for better purposes.' To

which his only response was a sort of assenting sigh."

This pleasing and decorous sensibility on the part of Jeffrey, as of one prepared to put on his immortality, was certainly not echoed by his antagonist. While the seconds were loading (or unloading) the pistols, Moore improved at once the opportunity and the amenities of the code by telling his Scotch friend a story of one Billy Egan, Irish barrister, in a like encounter. If Jeffrey laughed at it we are not told. An accurately timed sortie of Bow-street myrmidons here ended the meeting; and "Little's leadless pistol" threatens vainly forever in the pasquinade of Byron.

It is, perhaps, not so well known that Moore, deeming Byron's satirical verses a sufficient *casus belli,* in due course sent the noble lord a challenge. Byron, who was ordinarily as ready for a row as for a woman, made his brother poet a generous *amende,* and—what is more important to literature

—sent him the famous song, beginning—

My boat is on the shore,
And my barque is on the sea;
But before I go, Tom Moore,
Here's a double health to thee!

. . . . . .

Tho' the ocean roar around me,
Yet it still shall bear me on;
Tho' a desert should surround me,
It hath springs that may be won.

Were it the last drop in the well,
As I gasped upon the brink,
Ere my fainting spirit fell,
'Tis to thee that I would drink.

With that water, as this wine,
The libation I would pour
Should be—Peace with mine and thine,
And a health to thee, Tom Moore!

The friendship, thus formed, continued unbroken until the untimely death of Byron and remains one of the most interesting in the his-

tory of literary intimacies. Jeffrey also became a firm friend of Moore's, and many years after their meeting at Chalk Farm, he paid the Irish poet this tribute, which is quite as striking for a Scotch incapacity of humour as for an equally Scotch article of magnanimity:

"He has long ago redeemed his error; in all his later works he appears as the eloquent champion of purity, fidelity and delicacy, not less than of justice, liberty and honour."

IX

HIS PERSONALITY

WE have plenty of material from which to relimn the personal portrait of the Irish Anacreon. The difficulty is only in the selection. Jeffrey speaks of the inward light of his mind and happily describes him as the "sweetest-blooded, hopefullest creature that ever set fortune at defiance." "I never received a visit from him," says the keen and captious Leigh Hunt, "but I felt as if I had been talking with Prior or Sir Charles Sedley." From Hunt also we get this illuminating touch: "His eyes are as dark and fine as you would wish to see under a set of vine leaves; his mouth generous and good-humoured with dimples." "Moore is the only poet," says Byron, "whose conversation equals his writings." The author of "Beppo" and "Don Juan" was too fond of epigram to be uniformly just or kind, but he allows the

Irish poet to share with Lord Clare the melancholy distinction of his nearest friendship —excluding Hobhouse, Shelley and the rest.

Jane Welsh Carlyle, who was privileged beyond most women to speak, used to say, "My dear, never marry a man of genius." It is pleasant to turn from the conjugal infelicities suggested by some famous names to the simple happiness that inspired this entry in Moore's diary, under date of 1844, when the poet was sixty-five years old: "A strange life mine, but the best as well as pleasantest part of it lies at home. I told my dear Bessie this morning that while I stood at my study window, looking out at her as she crossed the field, I sent a blessing after her. 'Thank you, bird,' she replied, 'that's better than money'; and so it is. Bird is a pet name she gave me in our younger days."

"Moore's domestic life," says Lord John Russell, "gave scope to the best parts of his character. His beautiful wife (she was so beautiful that Rogers called her Psyche) was

a treasure of inestimable value to his happiness." And the same hand testifies that to the day of the poet's death she received from her husband the homage of a lover.

I'd mourn the hopes that leave me
If thy smiles had left me too;
I'd weep when friends deceive me,
If thou wert, like them, untrue;
But while I've thee before me,
With heart so warm and eyes so bright,
No clouds can linger o'er me—
That smile turns them all to light.

"Three women have loved me," writes Renan; "my mother, my sister, my wife." Moore felt that he owed all to his mother, an Irish woman of the best though humble type, shrewd, provident, and passionately devoted to her gifted son. Out of very small means she managed to procure for him every advantage of education. His success was, in large measure, the fruit of her intelligent thought and sacrifice. To his honor be it set down that he never regarded this debt of gratitude

as paid by the zealous and affectionate return which, so long as she lived, he did not cease to make her.

Washington Irving used to say it was easier to get a new book than a letter from our poet. My Lady Bessington solicited correspondence with most of the famous men of the day. They were all glad to write to her—Bulwer, Disraeli, Savage Landor, Dickens and no end of celebrities. She was, no doubt, a charming woman, with a personal fascination which does not survive in her literary remains. Her biographer is unable to offer any letters from Tom Moore to the Countess, though he was assiduously courted to Gore House. When Moore's mother died at a ripe old age, happy in seeing her Tom higher in fame and worldly esteem than her fond heart could ever have hoped for him in those early, humble days at 12 Aungier street, Dublin,—she had four thousand letters from her son!

If I have been at all successful in gather-

ing here and there a hint or a feature to make up the portrait of our poet, I shall be happy should the reader carry away from these pages such a likeness as presents itself to my own mind. It is that of a poet whose genius —the rarest and purest ever given to an Irish Celt—is, I believe, in its essential quality and message, without a peer in these English centuries. It is that of a patriot who amid strong temptations preserved the freedom of his mind; who kept his principles alike in the tumult of popular clamour and the polite sarcasm of the drawing room; who was never ashamed of his country—a luxury that has been indulged in by many Irishmen, immeasurably inferior to him in character and talents; who gave to his country his best thought, his highest inspiration, and laboured for her all the days of his life. We have glanced at those qualities which made him beloved in his home and in the near circle of his friends. As to the rest, he stood in the full centre of the world's admiring regard

and was the idol of two generations of a society as brilliant as has ever existed:—

> Whose humor as gay as the firefly's light,
> Played round every subject and shone as it played;
> Whose wit in the combat, as gentle as bright,
> Ne'er carried a heart-stain away on its blade.

Finally, I take him to illustrate the best possibilities of the Irish character,—a gentleman, the finest, maybe, that his race has produced. The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that his gentility—the poise and worth and true integrity of his character—was only a less admirable thing than his poetry; and, as being more susceptible of worthy imitation, I commend it to some persons of his own nationality who have put a libel and a stigma upon their race in the graceless labour of disparaging him.

"Of two things all who knew him must have been persuaded," says his noble friend and biographer, "the one, his strong feelings of devotion, his aspirations, his longing for immortality and his submission to the will of

God; the other, his love of his neighbour, his Samaritan kindness to the distressed, his good will to all men."

I think we may leave him in the light of this true and simple judgment drawn by one who was far better qualified to estimate the worth of Moore as a man than to define the message of his genius, the abiding value of his poetical achievement. That in just and satisfactory measure is yet to be done. Mine shall not be the hand to lift the veil from the sorrows that darkened his last years. The nightingale drooped in the heart of the rose. I know of few things more pathetic than the poet's own account, in his Diary, of how he struggled to maintain his wonderful buoyancy amid the coming-on of age, the slow turning down of the lights, the fading of his enchanted world.

So soon may I follow
When friendships decay,
And from love's shining circle
The gems drop away.

When true hearts lie wither'd,
And warm ones are flown,
Oh, who would inhabit
This bleak world alone!

He had done his best work long before old age came upon him; and all ensuing time, I verily believe, will take little from his fame.

X

IRISH PREJUDICE AGAINST MOORE—A FOOTNOTE

THE truth as to this rather obscure matter is, that Moore has long suffered from what the French call *le rancune ecclésiastique,* which we may translate simply as priestly spite, because, although he wrote a book in defence of the Roman Catholic religion, his personal relations toward it during the greater part of his life were never clearly defined. Then it is not forgotten that he failed to convert his Protestant wife and suffered his children to be brought up in the English church.

The rancor ecclesiastical has a long memory and it doubtless recalls the letter which Moore, then a young man enjoying the friendship of Lord Moira, addressed to the Catholics of Dublin anent some proposals of the Whig party with regard to the nomination of

Irish bishops. Moore's advice was practically to throw the Pope overboard, in view of the compensating advantages which were promised to Ireland. It is likely that the letter had small influence, although it was admirably written and sprinkled with the choicest Greek and Latin quotations. Moore was then fresh from college and not averse to airing his acquirements. In short, the letter fell flat, as a far abler document would have done, carrying the same propositions. Curious persons will find it in the supplementary volume of Moore's prose writings which was brought out in this country some years ago, under the editorship of the late Richard Henry Stoddard. (The same volume has even better things than this Dublin letter,—I have already referred to that delicious fragment, "The Chapter of the Blanket," which is very much more interesting than the poet's "History of Ireland.")

It seems there has always been a slight

doubt whether Moore died in the Roman Catholic faith, the faith to which he dedicated some of his finest poems and his most eloquent prose. S. C. Hall asserted that the poet changed his religion towards the close of his life, but Hall was not a competent witness, owing to his notorious love of gossip. Howbeit, it is good to learn that the Committee having the Dublin memorial in charge cleared up this vexatious point to its own satisfaction, relieving Moore of the imputation noted. The gravity of such a doubt, in Ireland, can hardly be overestimated.

That spirit of jealous envy of talent or success, which has been always a marked Irish characteristic, is also traceable in the depreciation of Moore. So you will find most fifth-rate Irish literary men and journalists agreed that Moore was not a first-rater. In fact, they try to diminish him by proposing as his equal or his superior such a poet as Mangan who, whatever his merits,—and they

are occasionally great,—is scarcely to be considered in the same class with Moore.

My own opinion is that two or three of Moore's melodies are worth half the theology in the world, and that all the wealth of Ireland could not furnish a monument to equal his just poetic fame. But I am glad that Ireland has accorded this recognition signalised by the Dublin memorial, however dilatory and inadequate, to the greatest of her poets, the most finished of her literary men, and one of the best and sanest of her patriots.

JAMES CLARENCE MANGAN

I AM to speak in this and the following essays of a group of Irish poets and balladists who lived and suffered and had their earthly portion toward the middle of the nineteenth century. There are many greater and prouder names than theirs on the roll of literary renown. Even the passionate love of country which inspired them is not perhaps so sure of appreciation now as it was in their own day. I have not been repelled from my choice of subject by the fact that Irish patriotism has been occasionally vulgarised here and abroad. No nation is always fortunate in its exponents, but the reproach will lie heaviest on that unfriended and oppressed nation which has never ceased to struggle during more than seven hundred years for its lost birthright of freedom. The

men of whom I am to speak, with their gift of poesy, expressed the devoted aspiration of Irish patriotism. That word may not ring as true as once it did,—but no matter: I believe they voiced the sacred hope of many thousands of their race, of whom the earth was not worthy. We shall do well to honour that hope, of whatever race we may be, though we need not share it.

It has been said that Carlyle's "French Revolution" gives the effect of reading history by flashes of lightning. An obscure and genius-cursed Irishman, who walked the streets of Dublin some sixty years ago, does the like for us with his poetry.

Recently a reviewer in the London *Spectator* called James Clarence Mangan the greatest Irish poet of modern times. Comparing the adjective "great" is the idlest occupation of literary criticism. But it is certain that Mangan has left some things which evince extraordinary power and a quality of

imagination rare among Irish poets. His poems send you to Irish history, seeking the materials with which he wrought his strange alembic of passion and power. They are alive with the genuine spirit of Celtic patriotism and have the elemental quality which is sure of its effect so long as fire burns. With Mangan, indeed, patriotism is a passionate, present actuality; with Moore too often a graceful reminiscence. What the former lacks in music is more than made up in vigour and earnestness, also in what I may call the sense of consecration. He is the last of the Irish bards. Had he lived in the spacious times of the gentle Elizabeth, a price would have been set on his head. The statute of Kilkenny was framed for such as he, and it was with his prototypes in mind that the humane author of the "Faery Queene" advocated the extermination of the whole race of Irish bards!

I have said that Mangan's poems send you to reading Irish history. Perhaps it were better to take your history lesson first. And

for the text here is a picture of Ireland at the close of the Desmond rebellion, in the sixteenth century. It is by the hand of Edmund Spenser who, in spite of his evident sympathy, was not averse from sharing in the plunder of a people given over to the Furies of that cruel age:

"For, notwithstanding that Munster was a most rich and plentiful country, full of corn and cattle, yet after one year and one half, they were brought to such wretchedness that any stony heart would rue the same. Out of every corner of the woods and glens they came, creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs could not bear them. They looked like anatomies of death; they spoke like ghosts crying out of their graves. They did eat the dead carrions where they did find them, yea, and one another soon after, in as much as the very carcasses they spared not to dig out of the graves; and if they found a plot of water-cresses or shamrocks, there they thronged as to a feast for the time, yet not

able to continue there withal; that in short space there were none almost left; and a most populous and plentiful country left void of man and beast."

One should, I repeat, take a course in Irish history—or English history as applied to Ireland—before reading the poems of Clarence Mangan. It is, perhaps, a little troublesome, sympathy with the Irish patriotic idea having fallen off painfully during late years; but this poet is well worth your trying to realise his "atmosphere." So, read that saddest of all histories, for the sake of its poetical commentary. Read of the foulest crimes against liberty and humanity that the earth has ever known; read how the cause of Christianity was invoked to destroy a free people; read how the Ireland of Saints was turned into a vast shambles; how during years of slaughter nor man nor woman nor prattling child nor babe at breast—yes, nor the unconscious life of the womb!—was spared by the ruthless invader. Read how the treaty

was broken ere the ink could dry; how the fealty of this devoted people in their ancient faith, identified through the fatal policy of their oppressors with the spirit of nationality itself, was made the pretext for their utter ruin. Read how the flower of Irish womanhood was driven from the land to a fate worse than death itself in the West Indies; how the strong young men, the best blood of the nation, chose for themselves a perpetual exile rather than look upon the desolation of their country; how the rest might go "to Hell or Connaught," as they chose!

After struggling through the horrors of each English "settlement," from Strongbow to Cromwell, through the long night of bondage relieved here and there by ebullitions of the national spirit or flashes of Irish valor, such as the splendid story of Limerick and the heroism of Sarsfield,—from Cromwell to Grattan and the Volunteers, the brief dream of a free Parliament, the revolt of 'Ninety-eight stamped out in a delirium of frenzy and

blood, and the crowning curse of the Union, —after this gentle course in the conquest of Ireland, beginning with Adrian's Bull and ending—but the end is not yet!—we are prepared for the fierce burst of lyrical passion, the most remarkable thing in the "'Forty-eight Movement," which was indeed, from the standpoint of insurrection, less than a flash in the pan.

Such is the annulling lapse of time that even Irishmen are now prone to look back upon these things with a calm regard. But that is not the mood to bring to the poetry of Clarence Mangan, whose melancholy genius fed on the wrongs of his beloved Ierne until its one strain was that of vengeance against the hereditary oppressor. It is this unquenchable hatred of the tyrant, this immortal aspiration of the patriot, that finds its freëst and noblest utterance in "Dark Rosaleen," which, if Mangan had written nothing else, would still entitle him to a high place in Ireland's pantheon of glory. To the rhythm

of these lines the terrible drama of Irish history unrolls. The twentieth century gives place to the sixteenth. The O'Neil and the O'Donnel come upon the stage and fight once more their glorious but losing battle. And it requires no stretch of fancy to hear the dauntless Red Hugh himself, in the dread moment of defeat, speaking this message of hope to his unhappy country:

O, my dark Rosaleen,
Do not sigh, do not weep!
The priests are on the ocean green,
They march along the deep:
There's wine from the Royal Pope
Upon the ocean green,
And Spanish ale shall give you hope,
My dark Rosaleen!
My own Rosaleen!
Shall glad your heart, shall give you hope,
Shall give you health, and help, and hope,
My dark Rosaleen!

Over hills and thro' dales,
Have I roamed for your sake;

All yesterday I sailed with sails
On river and on lake.
The Erne at its highest flood,
I dashed across unseen,
For there was lightning in my blood,
My dark Rosaleen!
My own Rosaleen!
O, there was lightning in my blood,
Red lightning lightened thro' my blood,
My dark Rosaleen!

All day long, in unrest,
To and fro do I move·
The very soul within my breast
Is wasted for you, love!
The heart in my bosom faints
To think of you, my queen,
My life of life, my saint of saints,
My dark Rosaleen!
My own Rosaleen!
To hear your sweet and sad complaints,
My life, my love, my saint of saints,
My dark Rosaleen!

I could scale the blue air,
I could plough the high hills,

O, I could kneel all night in prayer,
To heal your many ills;
And one beamy smile from you
Would float like light between
My toils and me, my own, my true,
My dark Rosaleen!
My own Rosaleen!
Would give me life and soul anew,
A second life, a soul anew,
My dark Rosaleen!

O! the Erne shall run red
With redundancy of blood,
The earth shall rock beneath our feet
And flames wrap hill and wood,
And gun-peal and slogan-cry
Wake many a glen serene,
Ere you shall fade, ere you shall die,
My dark Rosaleen!
My own Rosaleen!
The Judgment Hour must first be nigh,
Ere you can fade, ere you can die,
My dark Rosaleen!

II

A MILITANT POET

I NEED not here recall the effect of Mangan's fiercely militant verse in the crises of sentiment that led up to the glorious though defeated movement of '48. When he is at his best, he typifies and enforces the undying hope of Irish patriotism. He has no idea of placating the alien oppressor or his patronising descendant. The "sigh of *his* harp" shall not be "sent o'er the deep," but the fierce note of unconquerable hatred shall be struck for all who care to hear. If he laments at all, it is that the stern fight cannot be fought over again, that vainly he conjures the names and deeds of the hero brave.

> The high house of O'Neil
> Is gone down to the dust,
> The O'Brien is clanless and banned:
> And the steel, the red steel,
> May no more be the trust
> Of the faithful and brave in the land!

Patriotism is, in truth, the grand passion of this poet. Unlike most of his rhyming brethren, he has hardly a love song, and what he has is none of his best. Erin is his mistress and, addressing her, as in "Dark Rosaleen," he strikes the highest note of his harp. Nothing languid or factitious about the sentiment, but an impassioned earnestness that challenges the blood even where sympathy is lacking.

No Irish poet before Mangan rivals him in the use which he has made of the wild romance and legend of his country. It is true his work is but fragmentary—a series of poetical sketches scarcely to be equalled for vivid colour and genuine feeling. There is no orderly whole, like the cycle of Arthurian fables that grew into immortal poetic form under the perfect art of Tennyson—so perfect in nothing as in its patience. Mangan, whose own life was a tragedy, never attempted epic or idyl. Yet the poor hack of the Dublin publishing offices, with his fatal

appetite for drink and drugs, was in original genius the peer of any man of his time. For genius must be gauged by quality rather than quantity of performance; and art is second in order.

Swinburne has said that, judged by episodes solely and not by the whole of any work, the author of the "Cloister and the Hearth" is the first of English novelists. In like manner, estimating Mangan by a few poems, his rank would be of the highest. But consistent effort and that atmosphere of tranquil thought which alone matures the fruit of the poetical conception, were not for the gifted Irishman. Intervals of study and labour were followed by such squalid dissipation—always accompanied, perhaps often induced, by poverty which more than once drew him to the verge of starving—that the annals of Grub Street might be searched in vain for a story of equal misery. Poor Mangan's feasts were not seldom of the Barmecide order; but, as genius sometimes draws its

most precious food from privation and pain, so if our poet had lived a contented, reputable life, he would most likely have made a less durable mark in literature. Assuredly we should not have had that fearful poem "The Nameless One," in which the poet bares his own soul and shows the fiends with which his half-crazed imagination—yet sane enough for the purposes of art—had peopled it. This is not a pose. It is a true confession, as pathetic as ever was penned by a man of genius.

Roll forth, my song, like the rushing river
That sweeps along to the mighty sea;
God will inspire me while I deliver
My soul of thee.

* * *

And tell how trampled, derided, hated,
And worn by weakness, disease and wrong,
He fled for shelter to God, who mated
His soul with song.

* * *

And he fell far thro' that pit abysmal,
The gulf and grave of Maginn and Burns,
And pawned his soul for the devil's dismal
Stock of returns.

But yet redeemed it in days of darkness,
And shapes and signs of the final wrath,
When death, in hideous and ghastly starkness,
Stood in his path.

And tell how now, amid wreck and sorrow,
And want, and sickness, and houseless nights,
He bides in calmness the silent morrow
That no ray lights!

There is a strange likeness between the lives of James Clarence Mangan and Edgar Allan Poe; but that of the Irishman was one of more unredeemed wretchedness. Some critics have traced a curious identity in the genius of the men. Taking into account only the verse of Poe, I shall make bold to hold the Irishman the greater poet. He has less artifice in matching rhymes, but he has vastly more power and a far larger share of natural feeling. Mangan's sincerity is his distinguishing note, and it is not the least estimable of poetic qualities.

Under the Moresque work of the Irish singer, with its rune-like cadences, its haunt-

ing strains of elegy and battle, its crooning tenderness or blighting messages of anger, there glows as noble a passion as ever consecrated poet to its theme. Never was crowned monarch better sung than Con of the Hundred Fights; never have heroic valour and devotion received grander tribute than he pays to the knightly Tyrone and the Red Prince of the North, twinned with him in immortal memory.

I have spoken of the fidelity with which Mangan realises the lurid yet heroic past of Ireland. In this respect, he seems at times the greatest of her poets and the most vivid of her historians. It is impossible that any future poet shall better his work; it is indeed more likely that none will ever approach it. The bardic spirit of ancient Erin breathes in these thrilling songs, though it may be doubted that he owed much to the forgotten minstrels, some of whom he affected to render into an alien tongue.

Mangan rarely sounded the high note which

he struck in "Dark Rosaleen," or perhaps it is truer to say that he often essayed, sometimes touched, the note, but the perfection of form, so victorious in the poem cited, failed his hand. Yet "Dark Rosaleen" is not to be accounted the single success of a minor poet. Mangan tells us in one of his poems, with the fine exaggeration of the Celt, that his *"veins ran lightning."* Thomas Davis, worthy to be ranked with him, speaks of the "cloudy and lightning genius of the Gael." Davis, a poet of splendid inspiration, though not a pure Celt, exemplifies in his own work the quality which he has so happily characterised. But the palm goes to Mangan. By virtue of his purely Celtic genius—which so signally discriminates him from the body of Anglo-Irish versifiers and even from most poets of unmixed Irish lineage who have written in the English tongue,—the fame of Clarence Mangan is constantly rising. Within a few years there has been witnessed an extraordinary recrudescence of interest in the poor starveling,

drunken, opium-eating, inspired visionary of the Dublin garrets. It must in fairness be allowed that Mangan stands indebted for his recent great increase of literary reputation to the authority of a small group of critics in England—where due tribute is always paid the virtues of an enemy when he is well and surely dead.

One of the very finest of Clarence Mangan's truly Irish poems, in which the poet paints a vision of Connaught in the thirteenth century and at the same time allegorises the great tragedy of Ireland, the loss of her ancient freedom,—is "Cáhál Mór of the Wine-Red Hand." Indeed, it might not be easy to cite another poem from the Irish anthology, matching this in the strong spell cast by the poet's imagination.

I walked entranced
Thro' a land of morn;
The sun, with wondrous excess of light,
Shone down and glanced
Over seas of corn,

And lustrous gardens a-left and right.
Even in the clime
Of resplendent Spain
Beams no such sun upon such a land;
But it was the time,
'Twas in the reign,
Of Cáhál Mór of the Wine-red Hand.

Anon stood nigh
By my side a man
Of princely aspect and port sublime.
Him queried I,
"O, my lord and khan,
What clime is this, and what golden time?"
When he—"The clime
Is a clime to praise,
The clime is Erin's, the green, the bland;
And it is the time,
These be the days
Of Cáhál Mór of the Wine-red Hand!"

Then I saw thrones
And circling fires,
And a dome rose near me, as by a spell,
Whence flowed the tones
Of silver lyres
And many voices in wreathéd swell;

And their thrilling chime
Fell on mine ears
As the heavenly hymn of an angel-band—
"It is now the time,
These be the years,
Of Cáhál Mór of the Wine-red Hand!"

I sought the hall,
And behold!—a change
From light to darkness, from joy to woe!
Kings, nobles, all,
Looked aghast and strange;
The minstrel-group sate in dumbest show!
Had some great crime
Wrought this dread amaze,
This terror? None seemed to understand.
'Twas then the time,
We were in the days,
Of Cáhál Mór of the Wine-red Hand.

I again walked forth;
But lo, the sky
Showed flecked with blood, and an alien sun
Glared from the north,
And there stood on high,
Amid his shorn beams, a skeleton!

. . . . . .

It was by the stream
Of the castled Main,
One autumn-eve, in the Teuton's land,
That I dreamed this dream
Of the time and reign
Of Cáhál Mór of the Wine-red Hand!

Reading these poems now, in the present dead lull of indifference which marks the state of Irish patriotic sentiment, one is moved to a deeper interest than if the national hope were marching on irresistibly to that full fruition of freedom, so often promised by poet and seer. It is not that the cause is lost, but that it appears more often now than formerly as not worth a struggle.

We have fallen upon evil days,
Star after star decays.

Yet it may be that history has but reached a breathing place, and that from this seeming decadence of the national aspiration of Ireland shall spring forth a new and richer birth of patriotism than even this devoted

people have ever known. God grant it!—and God knows He has never been so trusted as by this people. Though the words of Walt Whitman are true, and that which the sorrowing ancient mother seeks,

> "with rosy and new blood,
> Moves to-day in a new country,"—

yet the sons of the Gael here in this broad, free land, and all of them scattered the world over, will not cease to look back to Ireland for the final proof of God's justice. And pending that solemn act for which the weary centuries have waited, what son of the Gael will not join with the poet, whose feet never strayed from her enchanted shore, in these tender greetings to "old Erin in the sea":—

Take a blessing from my heart to the land of my birth,
And the fair Hills of Eire, O!
And to all that yet survive of Ebhear's tribe on earth,
On the fair Hills of Eire, O!
In that land so delightful the wild thrush's lay
Seems to pour a lament forth for Eire's decay—

Alas! Alas! why pine I a thousand miles away
From the fair Hills of Eire, O!

The soil is rich and soft—the air is mild and bland,
Of the fair Hills of Eire, O!
Her barest rock is greener to me than this rude land—
O, the fair Hills of Eire, O!
Her woods are tall and straight, grove rising over grove;
Trees flourish in her glens below, and on her heights above;—
O, in heart and in soul, I shall ever, ever love
The fair Hills of Eire, O!

The dewdrops lie bright 'mid the grass and yellow corn,
On the fair Hills of Eire, O!
The sweet-scented apples blush redly in the morn,
On the fair Hills of Eire, O!
The watercress and sorrel fill the vales below;
The streamlets are hushed till the evening breezes blow;
While the waves of the Suir, noble river! ever flow
Near the fair Hills of Eire, O!

A fruitful clime is Eire's, thro' valley, meadow, plain,
And the fair land of Eire, O!
The very "Bread of Life" is in the yellow grain,
On the fair Hills of Eire, O!

Far dearer unto me than the tone music yields,
Is the lowing of the kine and the calves in her fields,
And the sunlight that shone long ago on the shields
Of the Gaels, on the fair Hills of Eire!

THOMAS OSBORNE DAVIS

TO the revolutionary spirit which filled Europe during the '40's and which in Ireland culminated in what is known as the "'Forty-eight Movement," is to be ascribed some of the most spirited verse of the last century. Happily perhaps for Ireland, the interest which now centres in that period is largely of a literary character, as indeed its results were rather literary than political. There was good poetry written, but no revolution had to be stamped out in blood, as in the memorable year of 1798. "Meagher of the Sword" (as Thackeray named him) and others gave proof of a new birth of Irish eloquence, while the great O'Connell, who would not purchase the liberty of his country at the cost of a single drop of blood, began to decline in his marvellous popularity.

For a time the Government suffered this patriotic and literary recrudescence to go on, and then when, in the phrase of the patriots, the "country was ripe for revolution," the machinery of suppression was put to work. There was very little blood-letting. Whatever the bitter regret then, we may be glad of it now. A few summary trials and transportations, and it was all over. "New Ireland" was discovered to be a euphemism for Botany Bay. The fatalism of Irish history had again asserted itself. In less figurative language, it was demonstrated that you cannot make successful revolution on paper, and that something more than sentiment is required with which to arm a whole people for a war of liberation. John Mitchel had said with fierce scorn that there were men who would not fight if Heaven were to send them muskets and angels to pull the triggers! The truth was that a rebel Irish army could hardly have been equipped on any other terms.

A brief space before this revolutionary fever flickered out, there died untimely a man who had created much of its patriotic ardour, much of its generous and devoted enthusiasm. Had he lived, Thomas Davis would have found a place beside Mitchel in the dock—it may be the tragedy of the "last of the Geraldines" * had been repeated. Dying at thirty-one, the grave closed over one of the noblest of Irish patriots, one of the most memorable of Irish singers.

It is true Davis would not have been content to be reckoned merely a poet, vital and authentic as was his literary vocation. His poems were written in hot haste to serve the propaganda of revolution. There is about them no smell of the lamp, no anxious striving for effect, no conscious artifice or alliteration. The burning sincerity of the sentiment, the full outpouring of passionate patriotism left little leisure to the poet for the

* Lord Edward Fitzgerald, concerned in the rising of 1798. Died from a wound in prison at Dublin.

labours of the file. Davis's inspiration is that of a true poet of revolution. Mere blemishes of form are not far to seek in the body of his work, but in the "imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength," much of this verse is not to be surpassed in the whole range of poetry.

Davis has at least one glorious ballad of battle—the finest I dare say since that of "Chevy Chase"—which I would beg you to compare with the best performances of Mr. Kipling and his imitators. It was nobly said that the old ballad of "Chevy Chase" "stirred the heart like a trumpet": for the splendid rush of Davis's verse, you must pick a simile from the poem itself, in the lightning charge of the Irish Brigade at Fontenoy—his own Fontenoy, the fiercest, truest song of battle that ever sprang from the heart of poet.

Thrice, at the huts of Fontenoy, the English column failed,
And, twice, the lines of Saint Antoine, the Dutch in vain assailed;

For town and slope were filled with fort and flanking battery,
And well they swept the English ranks, and Dutch auxiliary.
As vainly through De Berri's woods, the British soldiers burst,
The French artillery drove them back, diminished and dispersed,
The bloody Duke of Cumberland beheld with anxious eye,
And ordered up his last reserve, his latest chance to try.
On Fontenoy—on Fontenoy, how fast his generals ride!
And mustering come his chosen troops, like clouds at eventide.

Six thousand English veterans in stately column tread,
Their cannon blaze in front and flank, Lord Hay is at their head;
Steady they step adown the slope—steady they climb the hill;
Steady they load—steady they fire, moving right onward still,
Betwixt the wood and Fontenoy, as thro' a furnace blast,
Thro' rampart, trench and palisade, and bullets showering fast;
And on the open plain above they rose and kept their course,

With ready fire and grim resolve, that mocked at hostile force:

Past Fontenoy—past Fontenoy, while thinner grow their ranks—

They break as broke the Zuyder Zee thro' Holland's ocean banks.

More idly than the summer flies, French tirailleurs rush round:

As stubble to the lava tide, French squadrons strew the ground;

Bomb-shell and grape, and round-shot tore, still on they marched and fired—

Fast from each volley, grenadier and voltigeur retired.

"Push on my household cavalry!" King Louis madly cried;

To death they rush, but rude their shock—not unavenged they died.

On thro' the camp the column trod—King Louis turns his rein:

"Not yet, my liege," Saxe interposed, "the Irish troops remain!"

And Fontenoy, famed Fontenoy, had been a Waterloo,

Were not these exiles ready then, fresh, vehement and true.

"Lord Clare," he says, "you have your wish, there are your Saxon foes":—
The Marshal almost smiles to see, so furiously he goes.
How fierce the look these exiles wear who're wont to be so gay,
The treasured wrongs of fifty years are in their hearts, to-day:—
The treaty broken ere the ink wherewith 'twas writ could dry,—
Their plundered homes, their ruined shrines, their women's parting cry,—
Their priesthood hunted down like wolves, their country overthrown,—
Each looks as if revenge for all were staked on him alone.
On Fontenoy, on Fontenoy, hark to that fierce huzza—
"Revenge!—Remember Limerick!—Dash down the Sassenach!"

Like lions leaping at a fold when mad with hunger's pang,
Right up against the English line the Irish exiles sprang;
Bright was their steel, 'tis bloody now, their guns are filled with gore;
Thro' shattered ranks, and severed files, and trampled flags they tore;

The English strove with desperate strength, paused, rallied, staggered, fled—
The green hillside is matted close with dying and with dead;
Across the plain, and far away passed on that hideous wrack,
While cavalier and fantassin dash in upon their track.
On Fontenoy,—on Fontenoy, like eagles in the sun,
With bloody plumes the Irish stand—the field is fought and won!

It is small matter for wonder that, as to Davis, the sword soon wore out the scabbard. "I have taken too many crops out of the brain," said Thackeray. The young Irishman needed a frame of iron to withstand the wear and tear of his passionate thought seeking ever, in Byron's phrase, to wreak itself upon expression. It was said that Shelley had fancy enough to portion out a whole generation of poets. The poem which we have just read might supply them with motive energy.

Poor Davis! His short life was filled with

the joy of creation. If we might question the eternities, perchance we should learn that herein lies the highest compensation. The "precious porcelain of human clay" is easily shattered; but the spirit that could feel so ardently, the heart that throbbed with such rare devotion, the soul that dreamed such dreams of freedom for his loved country and shrank not from a generous martyrdom—these were of the essence of immortality.

The melancholy of Davis—that unfailing mark of the Irish poetical temperament—was twin-born with his poetic soul. Though he stands ready, like another Emmet, to offer himself as a sacrifice for his country—though the clink of the sabre is heard in many of his pieces and the fierce rush of battle in "Fontenoy"—yet that haunting sub-note of sorrow is never far absent, as the shower too closely attends the sunshine of the soft Irish skies. While his countrymen are drinking in the fiery songs with which he sought to rekindle

the national spirit, crushed under age-long oppression, the poet puts aside the martial lyre to tell this secret of his heart:

Shall they bury me in the deep,
Where wind-forgetting waters sleep?
Shall they dig a grave for me
Under the greenwood tree,
Or on the wild heath
Where the wilder breath
Of the storm doth blow?
Oh no!—Oh no!

No, on an Irish green hill-side,
On an opening lawn—but not too wide;
For I love the drip of the wetted trees—
I love not the gales, but a gentle breeze
To freshen the turf—put no tombstone there,
But green sods decked with daisies fair,
Nor sods too deep; but so that the dew
The matted grass-roots may trickle thro'.
Be my epitaph writ on my country's mind—
"He served his country and loved his kind."

Davis often seems a sort of poetic Sarsfield. He has the dash of the hero cavalryman,—that Murat of the ill-fated wars for James the Un-

worthy,—the fierce onslaught of his attack, and the fanciful likeness may be carried out in the touches of tenderness common to both. The martial poet can plan a sortie, like the famous night ride of Lucan through the Kieper mountains; and when he falls on the enemy the surprise rivals that of the capture and explosion of William's siege-train—*"Sarsfield is the word and Sarsfield is the man!"*

It was fit that this Anglo-Irish poet should sing in matchless verse the glory of that proud race who were "more Irish than the Irish themselves"; whose mournful yet inspiring history, extending over many ruin-marked centuries, forms part of the chief tragedy of Ireland. The poet was worthy of his theme, and never did he strike grander notes than when he chanted the splendid lay of "The Geraldines."

The Geraldines—the Geraldines! 'tis full a thousand years
Since, 'mid the Tuscan vineyards, bright flashed their battle spears;

When Capet seized the crown of France, their iron
shields were known,
And their sabre-dint struck terror on the banks of the
Garonne;
Across the downs of Hastings they spurred by William's
side,
And the grey sands of Palestine with Moslem blood they
dyed;
But never then, nor thence, till now, has falsehood or
disgrace
Been seen to soil Fitzgerald's plume, or mantle in his
face.

Ye Geraldines—ye Geraldines!—how royally ye reigned
O'er Desmond broad, and rich Kildare, and English arts
disdained.
Your sword made knights, your banner saved, free was
your bugle call
By Glyn's green slopes, and Dingle's tide, from Barrow's
banks to Youghal.
What gorgeous shrines, what brehon lore, what minstrel
feats there were
In and around Maynooth's grey keep, and palace-filled
Adare!
But not for rite or feast ye stayed, when friend or kin
were press'd;

And foeman fled, when *"Crom abo"* bespoke your lance
in rest.

True Geraldine! brave Geraldine!—as torrents mould
the earth,
You channelled deep old Ireland's heart by constancy
and worth;
When Ginckle 'leaguered Limerick, the Irish soldiers
gazed
To see if in the setting sun dead Desmond's banner
blazed!

And still it is the peasant's hope upon the Curragh's mere,
"They live, who'll see ten thousand men with good Lord
Edward here"—
So let them dream till brighter days, when, not by Ed-
ward's shade,
But by some leader true as he, their lines shall be arrayed!

Davis has tenderness as well as strength, else he could not be the truly Irish poet he is. It is indeed a tragic pathos that overflows in the "Lament on the Death of Owen Roe," the simplest yet most passionate elegy in the language.

I am tempted to revert to history for a moment, to that black page seared with the curse of Cromwell. The man who was a liberator as well as a regicide in England, played the triple part of butcher, bigot and enslaver in Ireland. Mark his words: "I meddle with no man's conscience. But if by liberty of conscience you mean liberty to exercise the Mass, I judge it best to use plain dealing with you, and to let you know where the Parliament of England has power, that will not be allowed."

And Oliver was better than his word. When he took Drogheda he ordered nearly the entire garrison hacked to pieces in cold blood, together with all the friars in the town. But that was hardly enough to warrant him in piously returning thanks to God, according to his wont. There was also a wholesale butchery of the women and children, and, without claiming specific credit for this, "it is good," as Cromwell modestly observed, "that God above have all the glory." Wex-

ford was served in like fashion—"a marvellous great mercy," he called it—no quarter being given and nearly three thousand soldiers and citizens slaughtered like sheep.

These items may persuade us that the doomed Irish people had good and sufficient cause to mourn the loss of Owen Roe O'Neil, the only man in their army at all capable of opposing the iron puritan in the field.

Long as the heroic O'Neil has been sleeping, it will be longer yet ere such lines as these shall lose their power to move the Irish heart.

Wail—wail ye for the Mighty One! Wail—wail ye for the Dead!
Quench the hearth, and hold the breath—with ashes strew the head!
How tenderly we loved him! How deeply we deplore!
Holy Saviour! but to think we shall never see him more.

Sagest in the council was he,—kindest in the hall,
Sure we never won a battle—'twas Owen won them all.
Had he lived—had he lived, our dear country had been free;

But he's dead—but he's dead, and 'tis slaves we'll ever be!

Wail—wail him thro' the Island! Weep—weep for our pride!
Would that on the battle-field our gallant Chief had died!
Weep the Victor of Benburb—weep him, young men and old;
Weep for him, ye women—your beautiful lies cold.

We thought you would not die—we were sure you could not go,
And leave us in our utmost need to Cromwell's cruel blow:
Sheep without a shepherd, when the snow shuts out the sky—
O! why did you leave us, Owen? Why did you die?

Soft as a woman's was your voice, O'Neil!—bright was your eye:
O, why did you leave us, Owen? why did you die?
Your troubles are all over, you're at rest with God on high,
But we're slaves and we're orphans, Owen—why did you die?

In the columns of the *Nation,* that brilliant and daring organ of the New-Irelanders, poetry like "Fontenoy" and "The Gerald-

ines" was rightly held to make proselytes to the cause of revolution; but little dalliance with the softer muses might be encouraged—as diverting attention from the stern business in hand. However, God in His wisdom has rarely made an Irishman—not to say, an Irish poet—without the capacity of loving; and so Davis has at least one love song which may well persuade us that his poet nature was complete. Humble though it be and born of the refrain of many a simple ballad, it has yet the pure pearl of sentiment, the fine gold of sterling poetry.

Come in the evening, or come in the morning,
Come when you're looked for, or come without warning;
Kisses and welcome you'll find here before you,
And the oftener you come here the more I'll adore you.
  Light is my heart since the day we were plighted,
  Red is my cheek that they told me was blighted;
  The green of the trees looks far greener than ever,
  And the linnets are singing, "True lovers, don't sever!"

I'll pull you sweet flowers, to wear if you choose them;
Or, after you've kissed them, they'll lie on my bosom.
I'll fetch from the mountain its breeze to inspire you;

I'll fetch from my fancy a tale that won't tire you.
O, your step's like the rain to the summer-vexed farmer,
Or sabre and shield to a knight without armor;
I'll sing you sweet songs till the stars rise above me,
Then, wandering, I'll wish you, in silence, to love me.
So come in the evening, etc.

Something in the Irish character—something of the genius of the race—seems to have died with the brilliant fiasco of New Ireland. There have been patriots since, but few of the fellowship of Mitchel. As for the poets of 'Forty-eight, we shall not look upon their like again. A certain impatience of Irish poetry, patriotism, sentiment, is manifest after that period, as if the world resented having had its sympathies too warmly engaged, to no purpose, and was bound it should not be so taken in again. For the world, like the individual, is selfish, and does not care to spend its grace with no prospect of return.

The revolutionary spirit which animated those "high sons of the lyre" has long since died out (the Fenian fever of a later day was

hardly a heroic symptom), and although one may not safely predicate either of Irish patriotism or Irish temperament, it is improbable that we of this generation shall live to see a flame rekindled from its ashes. The paltering ways of parliamentary reform, the doctrine of mortal suasion, the "paradise of cold hearts"—to apply a phrase from Macaulay—will not give us another Davis, another Mangan.

Now and then, mayhap, a fierce note shall be struck out of the sullen apathy of the people, recalling that splendid burst of poetry, that rapture of patriotism, which marked the magic era of 'Forty-eight. But the lover of "Dark Rosaleen" shall lie quiet in his obscure grave; the elegist of O'Neil shall not waken from his dreamless sleep. If consciousness shall ever come to these, under the weeping dews, the caressing shamrocks, it must be in that day for which the children of Erin cease not to cry, like the Psalmist; and in which their faith is as enduring as the mercy of their God.

GERALD GRIFFIN

THE love of poetry is given unto most of the children of men, but the literary concept of the thing is too often a pain and a weariness. The critics and the professors of poetry are evermore bandying their apple of discord. The great public,—as the newspapers phrase it,—the vulgar many, if you will, are not seldom a unit and cast a single suffrage. The many are in the wrong, of course, but I am not always sure of it. After much critical reading, one recurs with a refreshing sense to those sources of pleasure about which even the critics are agreed that it is not worth while to dispute. The mental ache is gone; the tension of thought which latter-day poetry induces is instantly relieved. There is hardly any artifice in these rhymes; an occa-

sional false quantity does not displease us; the poet cannot tell his tale simply enough and his words are the gold of common speech—we are very far from the Browningesque conviction that to be great is to be turgid and obscure. Here is passion enough, but of a natural sort, without a damnable complexity of motive and refinements that are super-sexual. Here is patriotism that shames the diluted article of our day. Here is love that does not lack the essentials of human interest because it is pure and Innocence may hold the page, unharmed of any lurking satyr.

It is told of Handel that he once said he would rather have composed the tender melody of "Eileen Aroon" than all the elaborate works of his genius. Simplicity, the first note in nature, is the last result in art. After a strong course of the reigning Muscovite or Slavic fiction, even after the more delicate and artistic pruriencies of the French realists, we think better of Doctor Primrose, take down the little volume reverently and follow

with a chastened heart the simple fortunes of the good vicar. And against the judgment of the critics who have in our day discounted Dickens, who have told us that one generation is enough to weep over Tiny Tim and Little Nell—against this chilling decree may be set the fact—reassuring to some of us who have felt the spell of the wizard—that "David Copperfield" is still the high water mark by which we measure the popular sense of the good, the true and the beautiful in fiction.

In a lately published volume of Irish songs, compiled by Mr. Charles MacCarthy Collins, M.R.I.A., the editor makes it a subject of lament that Irish poetry offers "no epics with a trace of the fire of Homer, of the grandeur of Dante, of the majesty of Milton; no descriptive poems like 'Childe Harold,' no satires like the 'Dunciad.'" Truly, I do not think the Irish are greatly to be pitied for their lack of epics. Ancient Irish nomenclature, to say the least, raises such difficulties that the reading of them might perforce be left

to the antiquarians. Even the exquisite art of Tennyson does not save the Arthurian legends from palling. Merlin, Lancelot, Guinevere and the rest "come like shadows, so depart," with no relation to the living world. If this be poetry—and it would be daring to doubt—we are perhaps unfit for the message. Our ears have not been touched that we may hear, our eyes that we may see. Too easily the fairy gift escapes our gross perception, nor may we follow it with the chastened vision of Sir Galahad, as he traces the mystic flight of the Holy Grail. Only we know, despairing of the beauty and the mystery, that it is lost to us—

> Adown dark tides of glory slides
> And star-like mingles with the stars!

The world is, indeed, greatly blessed with epics which it seldom takes down from the upper shelf. But this is, in a sense, to apply the yard-measure to poetry. A single line becomes unforgettable. A book sinks into oblivion. We have broken with the old

gods, who were, perhaps, no great gods after all. There shall be no more epics. For it is now an article of perfect faith that a man shall fittingly waste his whole life, heart, passion, the very inmost flame of him, for some dozen lines of real poetry.

The best of Irish songs are peerless in the respects of natural sentiment, tenderness, pathos and delicacy—and what else is there to put into a song? I do not limit this observation to the Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore, who stands by himself and whose songs, in their union of music and poetry, are in my view beyond comparison, either with those of any other nation or even with the happiest efforts of his gifted countrymen. Some of these latter seem at times to excel him in point of vigour and natural freedom, but not one of the few who are often ignorantly cited as his peers, is able to maintain, as he always is, the high level of the classic. If Moore have a fault, it is, perhaps, that he refines too much. The diamond of his Irish

song is the brightest in the world, but it is also the most artfully polished. Granting him all he deserves, the poetic genius of his race is yet fully exemplified by turning to all that is not his, and finding so much of the rarest value, "which mankind will not willingly let die."

There is no name in the literature of the last century dearer to Irishmen than that of Gerald Griffin. He lived fewer years than Mangan, and his, too, was an ill-starred genius. If misfortune be the true badge of the poet, either of these brilliant men may pass unchallenged on that score. Like Mangan, the author of "The Collegians" had to contend with poverty, and he did his share of starving in London, whither he had gone from Limerick at the age of eighteen to begin a literary career.

But the moral fibre of Griffin was of sterner stuff than that of the erratic Barmecide. With a nature deeply, even morbidly religious, he was proof against those Bohe-

mian temptations which attend failure even more than success. He took his short commons patiently enough, and between intervals of hack-work for the newspapers, managed to write a tragedy in the regulation classic mould, which convinces us that he was not likely to carry out his threat of "throwing Shakespeare in the shade."

Quitting London in despair after a few years, Griffin returned to his native Limerick. Who can forget the lines in which his sorely tried heart, his wounded spirit, too proud and tender for the sordid struggle, spoke his love and thankfulness at seeing old Ireland again after his weary travail in an alien world?

'Tis, it is the Shannon's stream,
  Brightly glancing, brightly glancing,
See, O see the ruddy beam
  Upon its waters dancing.

Thus returned from travel vain,
  Years of exile, years of pain,
To see old Shannon's face again,—
  O, the bliss entrancing!

Hail, our own majestic stream,
Flowing ever, flowing ever;
Silent in the morning beam,
Our own beloved river!

Here amid the scenes of his youth he drew the inspiration which has made his name immortal. The "Hallowtide Tales" and the "Tales of the Munster Festivals," appearing in quick succession, were an earnest that the young Irishman was capable of great things in prose fiction, if not in classic tragedy. And in 1828 when, on the occasion of his second and last visit to the metropolis of Gog and Magog, the famous novel of "The Collegians" was given to the world, Griffin at once sprang into a brilliant reputation, which the lapse of nearly a century has but widened and confirmed.

Boucicault's stage version, "The Colleen Bawn," has helped to make this novel one of the best known in the range of English fiction. It was a remarkable performance for a young man under twenty-five, and it con-

tains the promise, annulled by Griffin's retirement from the world and untimely death, that the author would write his name with the masters of the English novel. The great and kindly Sir Walter Scott had an approving eye on the young Irishman. Scattered through the volumes of his Diary, we find references to Griffin and his work, always couched in terms of high appreciation.

It is, of course, impossible to say what Griffin might have done had he lived to fulfil the earnest of his first success. Excepting Scott's, none of the great novels of the century had been written when the "Tale of Garryowen" saw the light. Dickens was to come. More than a decade was to pass before Thackeray should challenge *his* "pride o' place." Mary Ann Evans, better known as George Eliot, was still in pinafores. In fact, the splendid cycle of Victorian fiction had not begun to unfold. That is almost to say, the Art of Fiction, as now understood, had not been formulated. Sometimes the man seems

to make the epoch and then again the epoch seems to make the man. Mr. Howells has told us, with unconscious humour, perhaps, how much he is the gainer by coming after Dickens and Thackeray. Be it remembered that Griffin went before either of those giants of the Victorian age; and, therefore, on the score of literary obligation a balance is to be struck in his favour.

In the first dayspring of his rich fancy teeming with the legend, the lore and the romance of his native Mononia, our poet might well have said, "Time and I against any other two"—evermore the challenge of genius confident to art inexorable. Oh, that tale of Garryowen! how the truth and the pathos of it grip the heart of one who, like myself, must make the response that nature demands and prove the deep kinship of race by an authentic sympathy! In a day when we scan the newest author's style for evidence of degeneracy, and even dramatize the gruesome findings of pathology, what a delight to turn to

that incomparable chapter which rehearses the rise and fall of Owen's Garden! To me there seems a pathos truly epical, not unmingled with a rich suggestion of Irish humour, in the immortal stanza that epitomises the story of how Garryowen rose and how Garryowen fell:

> 'Tis there we'll drink the nutbrown ale,
> We'll pay the reckoning on the nail,
> No man for debt shall go to jail
> In Garryowen na-gloria!

With some of the faults of a young man's book, "The Collegians" is a story of the highest power. No other Irish writer has drawn the Irish peasant with anything like the fidelity of Griffin.

There are many passages in "The Collegians" and in "Tracy's Ambition" which you will hardly better with the best in Thackeray and Dickens. Has the biographer of Barry Lyndon given us anything truer to the life than the sketch of "Fireball" Creagh?

Has he a scene in which the tragic and the grotesque are more strongly mingled than in the death of poor Dalton? And is not Dickens matched on his own chosen ground of dramatic, highly wrought circumstance by the powerful episode of the finding of Eily O'Connor's corpse, or the accusation of the guilty lover by Danny Mann, or the remorse, grief and shame of the "little Lord" when he hears the accusing ballad from behind his prison door:

> As for that false and cruel knave
> Who stole my life away,
> I leave him to the Judge of Heaven
> And to the Judgment Day.

The truth of Griffin's pictures of Irish peasant life is not their only artistic merit. He had the genuine creative gift, that informing faculty which goes before everything else in the equipment of the novelist. With what truth of nature he discriminates a score of Irish peasants! The dialect may be un-

varied for all, but in each case the expression of character is defined with the valid touch of the artist. Loyal as I am to Dickens, I shall not give you Lowry Looby for Sam Weller: the one is flesh and blood; the other, according to Mr. Saintsbury, is "extra-human!"

But I am to speak of Gerald Griffin as a poet rather than as a novelist, although some of the best of his poetry is to be found in his prose—which indeed has led me to say so much of the latter. He has little of the bardic spirit which animates Mangan. No line of his recalls the ancient sennachie. But he excels the author of "Dark Rosaleen" in tenderness even as the latter surpasses him in strength. He has given us two or three of the very finest in the whole compass of Irish love songs. And, as an Irishman, I may be pardoned for believing that "My Mary of the Curling Hair" is one of the sweetest love songs in the world.

> My Mary of the curling hair,
> The laughing teeth and bashful air,

Our bridal morn is dawning fair,
With blushes in the skies.

Shule, shule, shule, agra!
My love! my pearl!
My own dear girl!
My mountain maid, arise!

Wake, linnet of the osier grove!
Wake, trembling, stainless, virgin dove!
Wake, nestling of a parent's love!
Let Moran see thine eyes.

I am no stranger proud and gay,
To win thee from thy home away,
And find thee, for a distant day,
A theme for wasting sighs.

But we were known from infancy,
Thy father's hearth was home to me,
No selfish love was mine for thee,
Unholy and unwise.

And yet (to see what love can do)
Though calm my hope has burned and true,
My cheek is pale and worn for you,
And sunken are mine eyes!

But soon my love shall be my bride,
And, happy by our own fireside,
My veins shall feel the rosy tide
That lingering hope denies.

My Mary of the curling hair,
The laughing teeth and bashful air,
Our bridal morn is dawning fair,
With blushes in the sky.

Shule, shule! shule, agra! etc.

Purity, no less than tenderness, marks the love songs of Gerald Griffin, and indeed both these qualities are characteristic of most Irish poetry of the affections. A chivalrous respect for womanhood and a certain delicacy of feeling in the warmest utterance of passion, are proper to the poets of a people who have in all times been distinguished by a genuine morality. The statisticians are here compelled to agree with the eulogists of the Irish character. And although virtue in the amatory relation has been sufficiently discounted by the practice of some poets greater

than Gerald Griffin, we are not the less beholden to the chaste muse of the Irish singer.

A common fatalism no less than a common genius marks this group of Irish poets. "Whom the gods love die young"—the tenderest truth caught from the antique world —tells the destiny of Griffin and Davis. Mangan, too, passed untimely—shattered, broken, aged, by the torments of a wrecked spirit. All had eaten "that bread which is the bitterest of all food"; all had climbed those "stairs which are the hardest to climb"; all had tasted that "deferred hope which maketh the heart sick." None attained to more than a half measure of years. Griffin, Davis and one more of whom I am to speak, were possessed with the boding of early death. I have already marked the morbid piety of Griffin, linked as it was with a presage of untimely decay, a feeling which had haunted him from boyhood, as he tells us in those simple and affecting verses:

In the time of my boyhood I had a strange feeling
That I was to die in the noon of my day,
Not quietly into the silent grave stealing,
But torn, like a blasted oak, sudden away.

That even in the hour when enjoyment was keenest,
My lamp should quench suddenly, hissing in gloom;
That even when mine honours were freshest and greenest,
A blight should rush over and scatter their bloom.

But be it a dream or a mystic revealing,
The bodement has haunted me year after year,
And whenever my bosom with rapture was filling,
I paused for the football of fate at mine ear.

With this feeling upon me, all feverish and glowing,
I rushed up the rugged way pointing to fame;
I snatched at my laurels while yet they were growing,
And won for my guerdon the half of a name!

Doubtless the poet's gloomy presentiment offers nothing of deeper psychologic import than the native sadness of the true Irish temperament, shadowed by an intense poetic sensibility. But however we may speculate about it, we know that it drove Griffin from

his literary successes into an Irish monastery, where he turned, like Chatterton in the play, upon his precious manuscripts, and destroyed them that his soul might have peace. Byron standing beside

> "the grave of him who blazed
> The comet of a season,"

teaches not the vanity of literary ambition more impressively than the single slab which bears the name of *Brother Gerald Griffin.*

CALLANAN,

THE BARD OF GOUGAUNE BARRA

IN beginning these papers I observed that my task should be to bring to your notice much with which the critic has no concern. Therefore, I shall make no apology for introducing into this group of Irish poets one so little known to the world of letters as the poet above named. We are, I trust, better informed in our judgment and sympathy. Poor Callanan of "Gougaune Barra,"—which remains one of the most memorable of Irish poems,—was in truth a humble singer, yet not unworthy of the comradeship in which I have ventured to place him. No poet has reported the characteristics of Irish scenery, the heartbeats of Irish patriotism, with a more instructed vision for the one, or a more passionate feeling for the other. Earth hues and sky tints float in his verse as if reflected

by the crystal wave of the Shannon or Suir. His were the eyes that saw, his were the ears that heard; and however slight the body of his work, it entitles him to a proud place and enduring fame in the Irish anthology.

Like Griffin, this poet is virginal in passion; a devout dreamer, a tender ascetic. And as did the mythical Kevin, he will flee from the blue eyes of Kathleen, "eyes of most unholy blue." Nay, if she pursue him too far, seeking to tempt his sacred vows, let her beware the anger of the mystic solitary, guarding his treasure of holiness with a fearful care. Let her think on Glendalough and its gloomy wave!

The poetry of Callanan and Griffin calls up many a haunting vision of Innisfail, the Sacred Isle. This is one I often see at the bidding of the gentle poet: It is a green land, of a greenness unmatched elsewhere, and over it the peace of the Sabbath is brooding. Yonder is a grey ruin, its garniture of ivy and climbing wild-flowers hiding old

wounds that mutely tell some glorious story of the long ago—perchance of blood that was shed in vain, of heroes who sleep unnamed, forgotten. See, there is a modest church, with its low spire and simple black cross, that most speaking emblem of human faith, cherished by this people as I believe by no other. A bell is slowly ringing to Mass, and there is a whisper at my heart that if I wait and watch with faith like unto theirs, mayhap I shall see among those quiet faces one whom I too early lost and whose anxious love shines upon me from the mists of childhood.

Ah, me! The Irish Muse was indeed a saint, and the poet offered at her shrine the homage of his purity and flawless faith. These minstrels often sang of love and touched the higher chords, but of that earthly love which is fiercer than fire, yea, which is sometimes more bitter than death, they knew nothing. I believe this acrid human passion too is needful, and greater poets than they have enforced the tragic truth. Yet the rare

purity of these elect singers touches with infinite pathos. It is of a like strain with the sadness of their lives, their idealised patriotism, their untimely decline.

It is distinction enough for poor Callanan, if no more might be claimed for him, that he has given us "Gougaune Barra," which has a charm for me that I cannot hope to convey to my readers. Born in the land whose living breast nurtured the poets we have been studying, I was so early removed as to be unable to retain any impressions save those which are stamped on the memory of childhood. The effort to combine these images into a picture intelligible to my mature sense—to find the magic *sesame* to that enchanted period—has, I confess, often occupied me, since the natural interest in one's birthright may plead for such a vanity. I have had only partial success in this attempt to recreate a child's paradise,—for the poorest environment may be that—and have therefore had recourse to Irish poetry of the familiar sort, in quest of some clue to

these broken memories. This was, of course, to part with my earliest faith, since no poetry, the work of ripened minds, can hope to bear the least resemblance to that divine quality which makes the vision of the child. After one has ceased to believe in the gold at the foot of the rainbow, there is an end to one's first poetry.

For some reason growing vaguely out of these early and disjointed associations, I have always been especially fond of some pieces of Callanan's. Nor (I should hope) am I to be suspected of an undue preference on the ground that the poet was himself a native of the noble county of Cork. My Irish citizenship is scarcely vivid enough for that. Yet, as I would say, Callanan has done much in helping me to realise the birthright of romance to which I fell heir unwittingly, and of which an untoward fate has suffered me to make nothing; and so "Gougaune Barra" embodies for me the wildness and sweetness of the Irish poetical inspiration.

There is a green island in lone Gougaune Barra
Whence Allua of songs rushes forth like an arrow;
In deep-valleyed Desmond a thousand wild fountains
Come down to that lake from their home in the mountains.
There grows the wild ash; and a time-stricken willow
Looks chidingly down on the mirth of the billow,
As like some gay child that sad monitor scorning,
It lightly laughs back to the laugh of the morning.

And its zone of dark hills—O! to see them all brightning,
When the tempest flings out its red banner of lightning,
And the waters come down, 'mid the thunder's deep rattle,
Like clans from their hill at the voice of the battle;
And brightly the fire-crested billows are gleaming,
And wildly from Mallow the eagles are screaming;—
O, where is the dwelling, in valley or highland,
So meet for a bard as this lone little island!

High sons of the lyre! O, how proud was the feeling
To dream while alone through that solitude stealing;
Though loftier minstrels green Erin can number,
I alone waked the strain of her harp from its slumber,
And glean'd the grey legend that long had been sleeping,
Where oblivion's dull mist o'er its beauty was creeping,

From the love which I felt for my country's sad story,
When to love her was shame, to revile her was glory!

Least bard of the free! were it mine to inherit
The fire of thy harp and the wing of thy spirit,
With the wrongs which, like thee, to my own land have
bound me,
Did thy mantle of song throw its radiance around me;
Yet, yet on those bold cliffs might Liberty rally,
And abroad send her cry o'er the deep of each valley.
But rouse thee, vain dreamer! no fond fancy cherish;
Thy vision of Freedom in bloodshed must perish.

I, too, shall be gone—though my name may be spoken
When Erin awakes, and her fetters are broken:—
Some minstrel will come in the summer eve's gleaming,
When Freedom's young light on his spirit is beaming,
To bend o'er my grave with a tear of emotion,
Where calm Avonbuee seeks the kisses of ocean,
And plant a wild wreath from the banks of that river,
O'er the heart and the harp that are silent forever!

Thomas Davis's "Lament for Owen Roe" has been called the most pathetic elegy in the language. Callanan's "Dirge for O'Sullivan Beare," purporting to be a translation out of

the original Irish, is assuredly the fiercest. If you have read Mr. Froude's powerful story, "The Two Chiefs of Dunboy"—and if not, I would urge you to read it—you require no introduction to Morty Oge, the famous smuggling patriot of the eighteenth century. Mr. Froude has characterised this Irish rebel with his usual force and, it must be added, his usual animus in respect to an Irish subject. There were critics who fell foul of Mr. Froude when the novel was published, and who did not scruple to remind him that his *forte* was for writing fiction in the guise of history. However that may be, "The Two Chiefs of Dunboy" is literature, and though the picture it presents of Ireland at the epoch treated is often discoloured by the writer's innate prejudice, I am thankful to Mr. Froude for having done the book if for no other reason than that it helps me to realise the poetical motive of Callanan's "Dirge." It would not be easy to cite from the whole range of Irish ballad literature a piece that so viv-

idly exhibits in little the tragic history of this people. Alas! the dirge of Morty Oge, the reckless darling of his people, betrayed to a foul death by one of his own race whom he had favoured and protected—is it not the ground-note of all that sad history? Bearing in mind the religious character of the Irish peasantry—even more deeply emphasised then than now—the maledictions of this poem take on a fearful interest. Read Mr. Froude's thrilling chapter on the "Death of O'Sullivan Beare" (which I think is well worth most of the fiction that has since appeared), and you may then, in some slight degree, realise the terrible pathos of Callanan's "Dirge."

The sun on Ivera
  No longer shines brightly;
The voice of her music
  No longer is sprightly;
No more to her maidens
  The light dance is dear,
Since the death of our darling,
  O'Sullivan Beare.

Had he died calmly,
I would not deplore him;
Or if the wild strife
Of the sea-war closed o'er him;
But with ropes round his white limbs
Thro' ocean to trail him,
Like a fish after slaughter,—
'Tis therefore I wail him.

Long may the curse
Of his people pursue them;
Scully,* that sold him,
And soldiers that slew him!
One glimpse of Heaven's light
May they see never!
May the hearth-stone of hell
Be their best bed forever!

In the hole which the vile hands
Of soldiers had made thee;
Unhonoured, unshrouded,
And headless they laid thee.
No sigh to regret thee,
No eye to rain o'er thee,
No dirge to lament thee,
No friend to deplore thee!

* The informer.

Dear head of my darling,
How gory and pale
These aged eyes saw thee,
High spiked on their jail!
That cheek in the summer sun
Ne'er shall grow warm;
Nor that eye e'er catch light,
But the flash of the storm!

A curse, blessed ocean,
Is on thy green water,
From the haven of Cork,
To Ivera of slaughter;
Since thy billows were dyed
With the red wounds of fear
Of Muiertach Oge,
Our O'Sullivan O'Beare!

IRISH BALLADRY

IN this paper and the preceding one I have dealt with a group of Irish poets whose lives offer a pathetic interest from resembling causes, and who were filled with that spirit which has given birth to an unique literature. But you are not to think that even with these, "high sons of the lyre" though they be, we have done more than to open the book of Irish balladry. I shall make bold to pronounce that ballad literature the finest in the world. The dominant note is one of lament for the lost liberty of Erin. Often a single deathless song is all that we have of the poet. Scattered over a period of about three hundred years, born of an oppression without parallel and a resistance without precedent, of a struggle ever renewed and ever defeated, this ballad literature of Ireland, of the Irish soil and

of the Irish heart, is the priceless treasure of a people that has lost everything beside. No literature in the world has more vitality than this—to say that it is written in blood and tears, is to speak without metaphor. Ireland may well rejoice her sad heart with this glorious possession—the testament of her martyrs, the pledge of her fealty, the witness of her undying hope.

It has been finely said that a people who, though subjugated, still cling to their native language, hold as it were the key to their prison. The bitter destiny of the Irish race has willed it to lose in great part this most precious inheritance; yet, out of a calamity so profound, has the spirit of this people wrested an unique triumph. For of the conqueror's tongue it has forged a mighty weapon that has prevailed more than armies and fleets; out of his alien speech it has raised a witness to confound him. In the magic legend, as we read, the enchanted horn, object of all men's desire, was awarded only to those of

pure heart and noble purpose. So have the Irish poets taken the oppressor's language as worthier of it than he, and they have breathed into it the genius of their race, and they have built from it a literature whose glory far outshines his barren conquest.

Strange is the destiny of the Celt! Conquered, he is yet conquering by grace of that native genius which could never bow to the law of subjugation; by virtue of that renascent spirit which has survived the deadliest blows of national misfortune. "You must not laugh at us Celts," said our great kinsman Renan. "We shall never build a Parthenon, for we have not the marble; but we are skilled in reading the heart and soul. We bury our hands in the entrails of a man and withdraw them full of the secrets of infinity."

This precious blue flower of Irish poesy is not a blossom that blows but once in a hundred years. True, it has its periods of vigour and splendour, and again its seasons of apparent decline. Through all it lives, as a thing

that the finger of God has touched with immortal life. Then one day, with a stirring at the heart, the secret of its life is suddenly revealed in fruitage and flower, as our own poet has conceived:

> Unchilled by the rain and unwaked by the wind,
> The lily lies sleeping thro' Winter's cold hour,
> Till Spring's light touch her fetters unbind,
> And daylight and liberty bless the young flower.

For the sap is always at the root. And in our late day, when it is sometimes charged that Irishmen have begun to renounce their age-long aspiration; when it is perhaps true that they have less patience than of yore with a literature that is effective chiefly for regret, —even now have we not seen the wondrous miracle appointed to this ever-faithful race? The winter is over once more, the bare branch again puts forth green leaves, and the dewy Irish heaven is filled with the glory of song!

Ah, dear kinsfolk of that ever faithful yet

oft-divided race, as we listen with joyous hearts to the choir of happy songsters that have truly made spring in the winter of our memories, let us not forget those earlier minstrels who sang, faithful unto death, in darker days. Let us often turn the page where is written the story of their devotion, and where is poured out the treasure of their genius. No prejudice shall deprive us of this literature, since true culture makes its own all gifts of the mind.

So I commend you, kind readers all, to a study rich in spiritual profit, which in these pages I have no more than suggested to you. Glad am I to have been favoured to lead you to the border of our ancient Eire of poets, that enchanted realm of song and sacrifice; and there I kiss your hands, with the devout farewell of an ancient and well beloved Irish minstrel:

For the sake of the dear little Isle where I send you,
For those who will welcome and speed and befriend you; ·

For the green hills of Erin that still hold my heart there,
Tho' stained with the blood of the patriot and martyr,
My blessing attend you!
My blessing attend you!

DOCTOR MAGINN

I

I AM to talk to you of two famous Irishmen who lived merrily and in their earthly course added much to the world's stock of enjoyment. We shall not, I trust, be the less interested in the story that, after making the world largely their debtor, these two died sadly enough, taking at last a tribute of tears from thousands of hearts which they had delighted with the frolic freedom of their genius. And, in truth, what moral is more trite than this—the merry man dropping at the end of the play his humorous mask and showing us his own tristful face behind the antic visage of Harlequin? Perhaps the poor mime was sad through it all—only the children are entirely deceived by the patches and paint.

In the change of literary fashions and the clamour of new voices, some courage may be required to attempt an hour's entertainment with two commonly neglected writers. I say neglected, although editions of their books are printed from time to time, and the audience of elect minds never fails them.

It is enough that the men with whom we have to deal have gained an honourable place in the literature of the last century. If you do not remark their books on every railway stand, or in the catalogue of every circulating library, you must not, therefore, conclude that they have no warrant to speak to you. Nay, I make bold to observe that they require you to bring your best to them, and that one's best is not, perhaps, always worthy of their acceptance.

Still it remains true that the vogue of many more recent literary reputations, far less worthy on grounds of high merit, is not for the Doctor or the Padre, beloved though they be of an appreciative and attached audience.

Whether indeed such a condition were desirable, offers a basis for argument, had we time and patience to go into it. Having long since attained that Nirvana which awaits the tired heart and brain, the Doctor and the Padre rest indifferent to the awards of gods and columns. Nor are they posthumously pursued by the literary syndicates—so their portion great or small of immortal fame is in no danger of being vulgarised. The syndicates may dissent, but I can see something to be envied in this.

O'Connell used to say that you could kick a better orator than himself out of any bush in Ireland. Dr. Maginn and Father Prout, on a similar principle, might be reckoned the two wittiest Irishmen of the last century, if wit were not so generally accredited to the race which claims them. They were contemporaries, though Prout survived almost into our own time and Maginn died twenty years before him. There was a strange resemblance in their mental gifts, their literary acquire-

ments, even their mutual antipathies and prejudices. The one was almost the analogue of the other. Both were good Irishmen, yet both were strong Tories. The one was a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, and, in spite of much that was uncanonical in his character, remained true to the ancient faith of his fathers. The other was as stout a Protestant as Doctor Johnson.

Maginn used to quote with half-serious approval the proposition of a certain Sir Joseph Yorke, to scuttle the Island of Sorrows and leave it under water for twenty-four hours, as an effectual cure for its political disorders. It may be observed that the Doctor seldom left himself under water for so long a period.

Prout was of the opinion that Tom Moore's Melodies had done more to bring about Catholic Emancipation than all the tremendous moral suasion of O'Connell, and he affected to hold the methods of the great agitator in abhorrence. I suspect his Toryism was only skin-deep, however,—not at all the robust

article of Maginn—for we know that he (Prout) gloried in a Limerick ancestor. The politics of both men is a curious study, but it may not detain us, since we are chiefly concerned with their literary significance. And here, as already suggested, the analogy between these two famous men is most striking. There is no great disparity between the productions of their genius. Nature almost seems to have struck them both from the same die. But let us begin with Maginn.

II

"HERE, early to bed, lies kind William Maginn," wrote Lockhart, in 1842. I wish you to keep in mind that simple obituary penned by the noble son-in-law of Walter Scott. "Kind William Maginn!" Yes, it was kind William Maginn who wrote: "Great and wise men have loved laughter. The vain, the ignorant and the uncivilised alone have dreaded or despised it. Let us imitate the wise where we may. Let our Christmas laugh echo till Valentine's day; our laugh of St. Valentine till the first of April; our April humour till May-day, and our merriment till midsummer. And so let us go on from holiday to holiday, philosophers in laughter, at least, till, at the end of our century, we die the death of old Democritus —cheerful, happy and contented, surrounded

by many a friend, but without an enemy, and remembered principally because we have never either in life or in death, given pain for a moment to anyone that lived!"

Ireland is a very small country, to be sure, as a matter of square miles, though we have been obliged to hear so much of it; but it does seem amazing that so many famous and illustrious Irishmen should have to be credited to the city and county of Cork. A fair city is Cork, with one of the most beautiful sea-ways in the world leading to her doors. Alas! many of those who have loved her and owed to her their birth, have gone out upon that shining track, never more to return, save in their dreams. We shall hear presently of one who carried a wistful memory of her during years of exile in alien lands until at last it found expression in a song which has wreathed his name with hers in an unfading laurel.

Maginn and Father Prout were both born in this delectable city of Cork. So was their friend, Maclise, the painter, the Alfred

Croquis of *Fraser's Magazine,* and the worthy associate of Maginn in making the famous "Gallery of Literary Characters." Maclise is also memorable as the friend of William Makepeace Thackeray, greatest of all who sate in the brilliant circle of *Regina.**

It would be easy, by the way, to draw up a catalogue of eminent Corkonians. There was "Honest Dick" Milliken, who wrote the celebrated "Groves of Blarney,"—now, alas! unsung, yet still potent to keep his honest name from oblivion. There was Barry, the painter, and Sheridan Knowles, the dramatist; there was Thomas Davis, heart of fire and tongue of gold, and poor Callanan, bard of Gougaune Barra. But, indeed, to rehearse the roll of Cork's illustrious sons might, in the end, become as tiresome as the catalogue of the ships in Homer. Modesty forbids my mentioning the name of a certain unimportant person (here peeping over your shoulder)

* Fraser's Magazine.

who has the privilege of claiming Cork as his birthplace.

So William Maginn was born in Cork, the son of a schoolmaster who knew vastly more than Goldsmith's immortal pedagogue, for he taught the classics and other useful knowledge, and conducted withal a flourishing academy. But nothing about the academy flourished at the rate that young Maginn did in scholarship. The mere summary of his acquirements before he was eighteen is appalling. Maginn *père* knew his son was a prodigy, and with true Irish pride set himself to bring out all that was in him. You remember how Dr. Blimber used to "bring on" the young gentlemen under his tutelage. It probably wasn't a circumstance to the bringing on of young Maginn. He graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, before he was eighteen. He died under fifty, and while still a young man he had mastered the Latin, Greek, German, Hebrew, Sanscrit, Syriac,

Irish or Gaelic, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish, Turkish and Magyar languages. It is also certain, as we know from his works, that he learned soundly and well the English tongue: which is quite an accomplishment of itself. But there is, incredible as it may seem, no reason to doubt that his knowledge of all the languages named was exact and profound. His translations, serious and burlesque, sufficiently attest his mastery of the classic tongues. His essays on the plays and learning of Shakespeare show his command of the splendid resources of our English speech. Edward Kenealy, who has left us a touching memoir of Maginn, and who was himself a linguist of great attainments, in a letter to Sir Robert Peel characterised Maginn as "the most universal scholar of the age." And Lockhart wrote of him:

"Be a Bentley, if you can, but omit the brutality; rival Parr, eschewing all pomposity; outlinguist old Magliabecchi, and yet be a man of the world; emulate Swift in satire, but

suffer not one squeeze of his *saeva indignatio* to eat your own heart; be and do all this—and the Doctor will no longer be unique."

Unhappily for Maginn's status in literature, this enormous versatility was purchased at the cost of more enduring performance. The Doctor did too many things well to achieve a surpassing success in any single line. As he himself would have said, with whimsical pedantry, the labour was "too autoschediastical." It has been said that men made good books out of his table talk—without crediting him, of course. The possessor of one talent is not seldom more fortunate than he who has ten. Maginn wrote the first of the famous *Noctes Ambrosianae* papers, and many of the succeeding series which through long years delighted the cultivated readers of the British Islands. They brought fame and fortune to *Blackwood's Magazine,* and more specifically, to John Wilson, better known under the pen-name of *Christopher North.* When Maginn's active brain was worn out and his

generous heart stilled forever, the canny Scotsman forgot to mention the obligation.

Grievous as the fact is to all who wish that genius may receive its due, we may be sure that it would not have been very distressful to William Maginn. The carelessness with which he regarded the fate of his productions, may be paralleled only in the case of Shakespeare. He rarely gave the authority of his name to any of his writings, which he threw off with incredible ease and fertility. Yet if only the pencil sketches accompanying the "Gallery of Literary Characters" were to survive, they would insure the fame of Maginn as the most brilliant and audacious wit of his generation.

Not long ago, Mr. Saintsbury, the eminent English critic, paid a significant tribute to the merits of Dr. Maginn, in tracing the early work of Thackeray. Maginn was Thackeray's first editor. Many other notable literary men confessed the benefits of his kindly word and helping hand. Careless of his own

fame and selfish interest, he was zealous for those of others. They say Thackeray satirised him in the character of *Captain Shandon.* I don't believe it. I prefer to believe, instead, that the great English writer was thinking rather of the erratic, brilliant Maginn whom he knew so well, than of Goldsmith, when he penned these words:

"Think of him, reckless, thriftless, vain if you like, but merciful, gentle, generous, full of love and pity. He passes out of our life and goes to render his account beyond it. . . . Think of the noble spirits that admired and deplored him . . . his humour delighting us still . . . his very weaknesses beloved and familiar."

There is a story that Thackeray, in his early period, long before he had himself caught the ear of the town, loaned a goodish sum of money to Maginn—which, of course, was never repaid—and that the circumstance aided materially in the dispersion of the young man's fortune. Many years after-

ward, when poor Maginn had passed away, Father Prout gave the true history of the affair to Blanchard Jerrold. Thackeray, he said, was eager to found a magazine, which should hold its own with the best. He wanted an editor and Prout told him William Maginn was his man. A meeting was brought about at the Crown Head tavern in Drury Lane—Maginn was always the better for business after a lubrication. He stipulated for five hundred pounds, to be expended in preliminary operations—"clearing the decks," was the Doctor's idiom. The money was advanced, the new literary venture sent forth, handseled with all the resource and skill and brilliancy of Maginn. It lived just six months and bequeathed an invaluable experience to the future author of "Pendennis."

After all, pecuniary debts lie easier, it may be, than literary obligations among the tribe of Scriblerus. I suspect that *Barry Lyndon* has given a slight I. O. U. to *Ensign Morgan O'Doherty*.

Maginn in his most surprising feats of genius and scholarship must always remain "caviare to the general." It is not difficult to see that he could not have produced his incomparable burlesques in the classic languages by simply swallowing lexicons through a long course of years. You may have little Latin, but, with a small share of trouble, you can't miss the heroic effect of Maginn's rendering of the famous old English ballad of "Chevy Chase" into the tongue of Virgil. Who that has ever read it, can forget the opening lines?—

Perseus ex Northumbria
Vovebat Diis iratis,
Venare inter dies tres,
In montibus Cheviatis;
Contemptis forti Douglaso
Et omnibus cognatis.

Or this infinitely comic parody of what Matthew Arnold was so fond of calling the grand style?

O dies! dies! dies trux!
Sic finit cantus primus;
Si de venatu plura vis,
Plura narrare scimus.

III

THERE is a well defined Age of Drink in the history of English letters and social life. From the middle of the eighteenth century it persists well into the nineteenth. I hasten to say that at no time has the great English nation been indifferent to strong drink. Men drank hard when William Maginn went up to London—they had drunk harder less than a generation before. Thackeray glances brilliantly at all this guzzling and profligacy in his lecture on the fourth George. Princes of the blood were not seldom as drunk as Wapping soldiers. Of course the nobility followed suit. The members of the honourable profession of the bar loved wine, we are told, as well as the wool-sack. Ladies of quality tippled and often had great need of their sedan chairs. *O tempora! O mores!*

I wonder if all this be really changed in the present year of grace, or doth Belgravia remain as a tinkling cymbal? . . .

Poor Maginn drank far more than was good for him, on account of his delicate constitution and the fact that he was, like Horace, a Mercurial man. Charles Lamb, you remember, had the same weakness and wrote an essay, "The Confessions of a Drunkard," which he afterward tried to explain away, but which I fear conveyed more truth than poetry.

I say Maginn drank too much, but it would be unjust to paint him as the Horrible Example among literary men of that age. Other men of his time and company drank more—some men, you know, do this better than others—and yet contrived to escape reproach. The Homeric potations of Kit North and his friends are not so much matters of literature as they are matters of fact. Maginn wrote a table of drinking maxims which had a famous vogue in the clubs. Wine and wit are there,

contrary to the adage, in equal proportions. He has done the trick for us in verse, too, and, remembering how many good men have had their moments of frailty since Father Noah discovered the vine, we shall thank him for his jolly song of

THE WINE-BIBBER'S GLORY.

Quo me Bacche rapis tui plenum?

—Horace.

If Horatius Flaccus made jolly old Bacchus
So often his favourite theme;
If in him it was classic to praise his old Massic
And Falernian to gulp in a stream;
If Falstaff's vagaries 'bout sack and canaries
Have pleased us again and again;
Shall we not make merry on Port, Claret or Sherry,
Madeira and sparkling Champagne?

First Port, the potation preferred by our nation
To all the small drink of the French;
'Tis the best standing liquor for layman or vicar,
The army, the navy, the bench;
'Tis strong and substantial,—believe me, no man shall
Good port from my dining room send.

In your soup—after cheese—every way it will please,
But most *tête-à-tête* with a friend.

Fair Sherry, Port's sister, for years they dismissed her
To the kitchen to flavor the jellies;
There long she was banish'd and well nigh had vanish'd
To comfort the kitchen maids' bellies,—
Till his Majesty fixt, he thought Sherry when sixty
Years old like himself quite the thing:
So I think it but proper to fill a tip-topper
Of Sherry to drink to the King.

Though your delicate Claret by no means goes far, it
Is famed for its exquisite flavour;
'Tis a nice provocation to wise conversation,
Queer blarney or harmless palaver;
'Tis the bond of society—no inebriety
Follows a swig of the blue;
One may drink a whole ocean and ne'er feel commotion
Or headache from Château Margoux.

But though Claret is pleasant to take for the present,
On the stomach it sometimes feels cold;
So to keep it all clever and comfort your liver,
Take a glass of Madeira that's old.
When't has sailed for the Indies a cure for all wind 'tis,
And colic 'twill put to the rout;

All doctors declare a good glass of Madeira
The best of all things for the gout.

Then Champagne! dear Champagne! oh, how gladly I drain a
Whole bottle of *Oeil de Perdrix*
To the eye of my charmer, to make my love warmer,
If cool that love ever could be.
I could toast her forever—but never, oh never
Would I her dear name so profane;
So if e'er when I'm tipsy, it slips to my lips, I
Wash it back to my heart with Champagne!

The gentle art of literary "roasting" seems to have declined in virulence since the days of Maginn. He was easily the first practitioner of his time, and his slashing reviews were long the feature of *Fraser's Magazine,* and other periodicals. His editors have rescued a sufficient number of them to give us a formidable idea of the Doctor's prowess. The papers in which he pretended to expose the plagiarisms of Tom Moore are among the most learned and ingenious. Maginn was a Tory of the Tories, and it was not to

be expected that he would bate of his edge for the warbler of Lansdowne House. Moore was greatly annoyed by the Doctor's roguish animadversions, but he did not proceed to the extreme of challenging him to mortal combat, as in the memorable passage with Jeffrey. I suspect Moore feared the Doctor's terrible wit, his "paper pellets of the brain," even more than his powder and ball.

As I have said, literary manners have somewhat improved since Maginn plied his merciless pen in *Fraser's* or *Bentley's*. His affair with Mr. Grantley Berkley sets a mark upon the time. It came near having as many elements of tragedy as sometimes attend the taking off of a Western or Southern editor in this glad free land. Mr. Grantley Berkley, the younger son of a noble house in whose escutcheon there was a very recent and ugly bar sinister, wrote and caused to be published a novel of indifferent merit. The chief offence of the author, to Maginn's mind, consisted in his expatiating upon the ancestral

glories of the house of Berkley, in face of the notorious fact alluded to. One cannot read Maginn's review of the book even at this distance of time without a shudder. Father Prout glanced over the copy and remarked to James Fraser, publisher of the magazine, "Jemmy, this means trouble!" And it did.

A novelist of our day would accept such a roast as a splendid advertisement. Or he might defend himself anonymously and with a heroic show of virtue. Mr. Berkley's noble blood would brook no *amende* short of assault and battery. Accordingly, backed by his brother and a hired bruiser, he went to seek "satisfaction." Finding Fraser alone at the publishing office, the three set upon him and so grievously injured him that he lived but a short time afterward. He lived too long, however, to admit of a charge of murder or manslaughter. The affair and its subsequent airing in the courts was the sensation of London. Before the trial was ended Dr. Maginn

had a hostile meeting with the aggrieved author. Three shots were exchanged without effect. Fraser's assailants were fined in a small amount, and Maginn wrote a vigorous account of the whole affair, which, to a present-day reader, excels in curious interest the bulk of his works. It will always occupy a page in that pleasing history, so dear to Addison, of "Man and the Town."

IV

MAGINN had his bit of romance and a sad one enough it was. Some who have written upon him say it had much to do in confirming the habits of dissipation which helped him down the descent of Avernus. I have my doubts as to that, but at least the theory does no great violence to the Doctor's head and heart. His own idea, as we know, was that a man who would not go to the devil for a woman was not good for much. The lady in the case was Letitia Elizabeth Landon, an English poetess of the thirties, whose verses were once held in critical esteem, and whose initials, "L. E. L.," were potent to thrill our charming grandmothers in that far-off sentimental time. Miss Landon wrote and published more poetry than the Sweet Singer of Michigan, but she did not live long enough

after marriage to take the world into her confidence. Thus her passion has a vestal note which is lacking to the later and more competent lucubrations of the American Sappho. But her marriage was a dreadful business to Maginn, who admired her prodigiously and, indeed, gave her a chance of immortality which the lady's own works do not warrant, by inserting a laudatory notice of her in the famous "Gallery of Literary Characters."

Maginn was then able to make or unmake a literary reputation. The lady, who really rhymed well, was flattered by the great editor's praise. He called her the Tenth Muse and proved it with a show of poetic imagination which, could the lady have claimed as much, would have gone far to confirm her in the title. But however Maginn might admire and belaud her and set her up in the estimation of the literary world, he couldn't marry her, for the excellent reason that there was already a Mrs. Maginn, of whom we know no more. So the Tenth Muse, weary-

ing at last of platonics, went in bravely like every true daughter of Eve to have her illusions shattered. She married a Scotch captain with a furious temper, who took the poor Muse away with him to Cape Coast Castle in Africa, where he commanded. There she lived only a few months, and the circumstances of her death were so strange that it was long believed she had made away with herself to escape the violence of her husband.

And William Maginn, who had been going down for some time, but in an undecided way, so that his friends indulged the hope that he might think better of it and retrace his steps, —William Maginn, after the death of this woman, went on down hill like a man who knew his road and would follow it to the end.

We may not dwell on the close of Maginn's life, which was as gloomy as its meridian had been brilliant. As Moore says of a more famous Irishman, Richard Brinsley Sheridan,

whom Maginn strongly resembled in his last evil fortune, he "passed too often the Rubicon of the cup." Dunned by bailiffs, dragged to the Fleet prison for debt, reduced to the meanest shifts to support existence—in reading the last sad chapter, one is reminded of the tragedy of Savage and that race of ill-fated men of genius in whose misfortunes Johnson shared and of whom Macaulay describes him as the last survivor. This melancholy distinction belongs rather to William Maginn. Neglected by the great party which he had served so ably and long with his pen, shattered in health by privation and disease,—he sank lower and lower. After much troubling comes the great peace. It came to poor William Maginn in the 48th year of his age, in the year 1842, at the town of Walton-on-Thames, to which he had retired from the great Babel he loved so well. Sad and untimely as was that death, and sordid as was the setting of the last scene of all, we may not look upon it without a solemn

interest and pity. Nay, a beam of glory lighted up the last hours of the broken man of genius. The master passion strong even in death, the courage of immortal mind, strikes us mute in the presence of this tragedy. Lying with his beloved Homer open upon his breast and unconscious of the nearness of the end, he dictated to his faithful friend Kenealy a translation from the classic page. Thus, in a manner thrilling with high emotion, the Silence came to him: and so, with a reverent thought, we may leave "kind William Maginn."

V

NOTE ON GRANTLEY BERKLEY

IN his third paper on "The Songs of Horace" (originally published, like the rest of the series, in *Fraser's Magazine*), Father Prout makes the following caustic reference to the Berkley-Maginn affair:

"On a late occasion the unanimous expression of cordial sympathy which burst from every organ of public opinion, in reprobation of a brutal assault, has been to us consolatory and gratifying. We shall hazard the charge of vanity, perhaps, but we can not help replying to such testimonies of fellow-feeling toward ourselves in the language of a gifted Roman—*Est mihi jucunda in malis, et grata in dolore, vestra erga me voluntas; sed curam de me quaeso deponite* *—(Cicero). The interests of literature are still uppermost in our thoughts,

* Which may be Englished—

"Your good will toward myself is agreeable to me in misfortunes and grateful in suffering, but I pray you have no anxiety concerning me."

In those days no article was deemed "finished" without a sprinkling of classical quotations. We have changed all that.

and take precedency of any selfish considerations. We will ever be found at our post, intrepidly denouncing the vulgar arrogance of booby scribblers, unsparingly censuring the intrusion into literary circles of silly pretenders, ignorant horse-jockeys and brainless bullies."

It is time to dismiss Mr. Grantley Berkley.

The Hon. Grantley Fitzhardinge Berkley belongs to the category of famous bad authors. His name is known of many who never saw and never cared to see his paltry books. Maginn and Prout have preserved him from time's erasure in the mordant acid of their wit. There most curious readers are content to learn of him, leaving his "works" in the limbo of the illustrious obscure. That Berkley was a man of some spirit, it cannot be gainsaid: he long survived his two terrible enemies of "Fraser's," dying in 1881 at a patriarchal age.

In his "Life and Reminiscences," written in his lying old age, Grantley Berkley took the ass's privilege of kicking the dead lion, and sought to cast unmerited obloquy upon

the memory of Maginn. Berkley's account of the latter's "persecution" of Miss Landon and of his own chivalrous intervention, has been totally discredited by honest critics. The literary pretender is shown in Berkley's laborious and far-fetched attempt to prove a motive for Maginn's savage critique on his novel "Berkley Castle." Enough of him.

Here is Lockhart's elegy on Maginn, memorable enough for its mixture of wit and truth and pathos:

Here, early to bed, lies kind William Maginn,
Who with genius, wit, learning, life's trophies to win,
Had neither great Lord nor rich cit of his kin,
Nor discretion to set himself up, as to tin;
So his portion soon spent, like the poor heir of Lynn,
He turned author while yet was no beard on his chin;
And whoever was out, or whoever was in,
For the Tories his fine Irish brains he would spin,
Who received prose and rhyme with a promising grin,
"Go ahead, you queer fish, and more power to your fin,"
But to save from starvation, stirr'd never a pin.
Light for long was his heart, though his breeches were thin,

Else his acting for certain was equal to Quin;
But at last he was beat and sought help from the bin,
(All the same to the Doctor, from claret to gin),
Which led swiftly to gaol with consumption therein.
It was much when the bones rattled loose in his skin,
He got leave to die here, out of Babylon's din.
Barring drink and the girls, I ne'er heard of a sin—
Many worse, better few, than bright, broken Maginn!

FATHER PROUT

I

IN the beautiful and well-beloved city of Cork, within the sound of those bells whose music he has bidden us all to hear, was born Francis Sylvester Mahony, famous in the world of letters and dear to every Irish heart as Father Prout. Let us in the short space we may devote to him call often by that name which he has made immortal.

I have noted the neglect into which Maginn and Prout have fallen with regard to the great body of readers. It is, however, true that Prout's literary estate is in much better case than that of his friend and contemporary.

Since its publication, over a half century ago, the "Reliques" of Father Prout has steadily advanced in literary favour. The suffrages of all competent scholars award

Prout the rank of a classic. His love of Horace and profound acquaintance with that most charming of poets; his exquisite and varied culture; the expression of his native genius, which has been defined as a "combination of the Teian lyre and Irish bagpipe, of the Ionian dialect and Cork brogue"; the audacity and fertility of his wit,—all concur in making Prout the delight of the cultivated reader. Another fortunate circumstance is, that he does not carry too much baggage for immortality. There he is for you, within the compass of a tidy book, like Horace himself, whom he has so helped us to love and understand. Ah, they were kindred spirits, the little man of Rome and the little man of Cork—but we are to consider that later on.

Francis Mahony's vocation in life was early determined for him, as has been the laudable custom of pious Irish parents. Perhaps the reverence for the priesthood is not so marked in any other people. It must also be said that this fine sentiment has never stood

in need of the amplest justification. The Irish priesthood have contributed no small share to the glory of the Catholic church, and every page of Irish history is illustrated with their heroism and sacrifice. Hence, the fond ambition to have "a priest in the family" has sanctified many a humble hearth. Doubtless it has had much to do in weaving the destiny of the ill-fated island. Leave it out, and the chequered story of Ireland is baffling in the extreme.

It might have been expected that a lad of such parts as young Mahony early displayed would have fulfilled the fond hope of his parents and become a credit to the Church. The wise Jesuits, his first masters, knew better. Trained in the perception of character and motive, reading all the secrets of the heart with wonderful subtlety, it was seldom they erred in tracing the bent of a mind which they had assisted to form. It is no slight testimony to their acuteness in divining character that they recognised in the young

postulant for the priesthood the future satirist, and that they combated from the first his decision to enter the sacred calling.

But they taught him well, and he never forgot the debt he owed them. Careless as he afterwards became in scattering the barbed arrows of his wit, he never failed in affection and respect for the great Order of Loyola under whose tutelage he had drunk at the founts of classic learning. One of the best works of his pen is a vindication of the Society of Jesus from the infamous charges hurled against it by ignorant prejudice or deliberate malice. The march of the Jesuits through Europe for two centuries he has likened to the retreat of Xenophon with his ten thousand. In a paragraph worthy of Macaulay, he describes the great Bossuet "coming forth from the College of Dijon, in Burgundy, to rear his mitred front at the court of a despot, and to fling the bolts of his tremendous oratory among a crowd of elegant voluptuaries." "They cradled the genius of Corneille," he exclaims;

"Molière was the fruit of their classic guidance. Scarcely a name known to literature in the seventeenth century which does not bear testimony to their prowess in the province of education." And, with a caustic freedom, which his wise preceptors would have deprecated, he scores the Franciscan Pope Clement XIV for his act in issuing the famous Bull of July, 1773, by which the great Society of Jesus was suppressed.

Young Mahony's probation was a long one and, as I have said, the end approved the wisdom of his masters. At 12 years of age he was sent to the Jesuit College of Saint Acheul, at Amiens, France; thence to the Parisian seminary of the Order, and still later to the country house at Montrouge. To the Jesuit College at Rome he went for philosophy and theology; and, for a final test, he was packed off to the College of Clongowes, in his native country, which was under the charge of the same Order.

At this last-named institution, Mahony was

made prefect and master of rhetoric. Whatever doubt there might be touching his vocation for the priesthood, there could exist none as to his attainments. After a brief but edifying season of grace, the young prefect, with some congenial spirits, took a day's outing. Potheen somehow figured in the diversions, and, as a result, all had to be carried on turf loads to the college at midnight. The reverend authorities were justly scandalised, though, I think, they might have made more allowance for the punch, the smoky devil in which all the papal bulls since St. Patrick might neither exorcise nor excommunicate. The leader of misrule was sent back to the continent, and spent two years more in Rome, disciplining his restless spirit, but (I fear much) forgetting to say *mea culpa* when the bright world opened, at rare intervals, its seduction before him.

At last Francis Sylvester Mahony obtained his desire, and, with much misgiving on the part of his spiritual fathers, he was ordained

a priest of the Roman Catholic Church at Lucca. In due time he saw and repented his mistake, which cast a shadow over his whole after life. With a nature intolerant of restraint and a pride of intellect that knew no compromise, the humble and laborious station of a simple priest was not for Francis Mahony. A born man of letters, with the need of expression came the need of freedom. There was in Mahony no tincture of the hypocrite. He refused to eat bread at the cost of his self-respect, and, turning aside from that which had been the cherished ambition of his early life, he took up manfully the hard portion of the literary worker.

But note this: He was never what is called an "unfrocked priest," a term of reproach perhaps the most poignant among the race from which he sprang. The act of secularisation was voluntary. Nor, in his freëst Bohemian moments, would he permit the slightest aspersion upon the priestly character. Though he felt himself spiritually without

the temple, he clung with a strange pride to the mere empty name of that sacred calling which had cost him so many weary years of probation. *Sacerdos in aeternum ordinem Melchizedec.* And to the last he read his breviary as faithfully as he read his well-beloved Horace and Béranger.

II

THERE is a droll story that Rome once contemplated making a cardinal of Father Prout, as a suitable recognition of his eminent literary attainments. It is said that some members of the Sacred College got hold of Prout's polyglot version of a familiar Irish song and were so delighted with it that they instantly moved the Holy Father to confer the red hat upon an author so deserving. A little examination of the records spoiled the most unique proposition in ecclesiastical history. Father Prout's comment is reported to have been: "All roads, they say, lead to Rome, but would it not have been droll if I had got myself there through the Groves of Blarney?" The reference is to writings which have indeed brought him farther on his way.

The great Archbishop McHale ("John of Tuam") once rebuked a censor of Prout with the remark: "The man who wrote the Prout Papers is an honour to his country." These famous essays, which form the corner-stone of Prout's literary reputation, were contributed to *Fraser's Magazine* for the year 1834. They have been happily described as a "mixture of Toryism, classicism, sarcasm and punch." Among scholarly readers the fame of Prout has steadily appreciated, and to-day the Prout Papers seem to occupy as secure a place as the Essays of Elia, which they must be allowed to surpass in variety of wit and ingenious learning.

Father Prout was the friend of Dickens and of Thackeray. He contributed to *Bentley's Miscellany,* of which Dickens was editor, and from Italy he sent a congratulatory ode to Thackeray on the establishment of the *Cornhill Magazine.* Dr. Maginn and Father Prout had so many things in common, as well as an Irish temperament, that one looks for

some trace of jealousy in their brilliant emulation. I am glad to say, as an Irishman, that there is not the least suggestion of an unworthy feeling between these famous men. Maginn it was who introduced Prout to the columns of *Fraser's* and gave him the place of honour during twelve successive issues of the magazine. There is not so much love wasted among the literary fraternity as to render nugatory the circumstance of this generous friendship. When we remember the quarrel between Thackeray and Dickens, which divided the British nation into two hostile camps, we may wonder the more at it. Perhaps a falling out between the Doctor and the Padre would have been so terrific in its literary results—fancy the fulminations of that polyglot armoury!—that both shrank from the encounter. At any rate, these tremendous wits, each a born fighter and springing from a race that never declines a fight, met, saluted, smiled, and passed on their earthly pilgrimage.

Prout took far better care of his literary baggage than did poor Maginn, who wrote for the day and the hour, caring nothing for the future. Yet a simple song has been more effective in preserving the memory of Prout than the wittiest and most learned of his writings. Such is the spell of true sympathy, making the whole world kin. A wanderer for years in many lands, singing the songs of stranger peoples, he was equally at home on the banks of the Tiber, the Arno, the Seine and the Thames. Ah, it was to none of these that he poured out the love of his heart when he sang the song of the

"BELLS OF SHANDON"

With deep affection
And recollection
  I often think of
    Those Shandon Bells
Whose sounds so wild would
In days of childhood
  Fling round my cradle
    Their magic spells:

On this I ponder
Where'er I wander,
And thus grow fonder
Sweet Cork, of thee,
With thy bells of Shandon
That sound so grand on
The pleasant waters
Of the river Lee.

I've heard bells chiming
Full many a clime in,
Tolling sublime in
Cathedral shrine;
While at a glib rate
Brass tongues would vibrate—
But all their music
Spoke naught like thine;
For memory dwelling
On each proud swelling
Of the belfry knelling
Its bold notes free,
Made the bells of Shandon
Sound far more grand on
The pleasant waters
Of the river Lee.

I've heard bells tolling
Old "Adrian's Mole" in,
Their thunder rolling
From the Vatican;
And cymbals glorious
Swinging uproarious
In the gorgeous turrets
Of Notre Dame;
But thy sounds were sweeter
Than the dome of Peter
Flings o'er the Tiber,
Pealing solemnly:
O the bells of Shandon
Sound far more grand on
The pleasant waters
Of the river Lee.

There's a bell in Moscow,
While on tower and Kiosk, O!
In Saint Sophia
The Turkman gets,
And loud in air
Calls men to prayer
From the tapering summit
Of tall minarets.

Such empty phantom
I freely grant 'em,
But there's an anthem
More dear to me;
'Tis the bells of Shandon
That sound so grand on
The pleasant waters
Of the river Lee.

III

PROUT'S habit of "upsetting things into English," from the modern as well as the classic languages, has made the world his debtor and greatly enriched his literary legacy. Excellent as are his translations from Béranger, Hugo and the Italian poets, it is to his renderings from Horace that we must award the palm. I have already noted his keen sympathy with the most charming and immortally young of classic writers. Something of the same fine touch is visible in Maginn's Homeric ballads, and perhaps these are to be preferred for a rude vigour and fidelity to the original. You do not always get what you expect from the roguish Father Prout. The surprise of his wit is as captivating and unexpected as the famous Killarney echo:

> "How do you do, Paddy Blake?"—
> "Pretty well, I thank you."

Nevertheless, of the many hands that have laboured at Horace—alas! the labour is too often manifest—the most deft and skilful, I believe, was the hand of Prout. The felicity of his verse is no less admirable than the sureness of his interpretation, and the occasional familiarity which he takes with the classic text only gives a zest to the reading. I should add that the prose essays in which these Horatian renderings are imbedded seem to me among the best of their kind.

Mr. Andrew Lang, who can seldom resist the temptation to say a smart thing,—an indulgence which may easily be pardoned to a North Briton,—remarks that Doctor Maginn in his translations from the Greek does not scruple to make Homer dance an Irish jig. Whatever truth or point may lie in this observation, it is not to be gainsaid that Prout's paraphrases of Horace are the better for their Milesian flavour. Indeed, they have the somewhat paradoxical merit of being at once genuinely classical and unmistakably Irish.

However, when they are most Irish, it may be suspected that the Padre is but having his "game" with us. That he could, when he cared, translate both worthily and powerfully, —like a scholar and a poet,—is sufficiently attested by his unsurpassed rendering of Ode II., Lib. I. Such of my readers as are not acquainted with the original will thank me for laying this fine version before them,—unquestionably the *tour de force* of all Horatian translations.

ODE II.

Jam satis terris nivis atque dirae grandinis, etc.

Since Jove decreed in storm to vent
The winter of his discontent,
Thundering o'er Rome impenitent
With red right hand,
The flood-gates of the firmament
Have drenched the land.

Terror hath seized the minds of men,
Who deemed the days had come again
When Proteus led, up mount and glen,
And verdant lawn,

Of teeming ocean's darksome den,
The monstrous spawn.

When Pyrrha saw the ringdove's nest
Harbour a strange unbidden guest,
And by the deluge dispossesst
Of glade and grove,
Deer down the tide with antler'd crest
Affrighted drove.

We saw the yellow Tiber, sped
Back to his Tuscan fountain-head,
O'erwhelm the sacred and the dead
In one fell doom,
And Vesta's pile in ruins spread,
And Numa's tomb.

* * *

Whom can our country call to aid?
Where must the patriot's vow be paid?
With orisons shall vestal maid
Fatigue the skies?
Or will not Vesta's frown upbraid
Her votaries?

Augur Apollo! shall we kneel
To thee, and for our commonweal

With humbled consciousness appeal?
Oh, quell the storm!
Come, though a silver vapor veil
Thy radiant form!

Will Venus from Mount Eryx stoop
And to our succor hie with troop
Of laughing Graces, and a group
Of cupids round her?
Or comest thou with wild war-whoop,
Dread Mars! our FOUNDER?

Whose voice so long bade peace avaunt,
Whose war-dogs still for slaughter pant,
The tented field thy chosen haunt,
Thy child, the ROMAN,
Fierce legioner, whose visage gaunt
Scowls on the foeman.

Or hath young HERMES, MAIA'S son,
The graceful guise and form put on
Of thee, AUGUSTUS? and begun
(Celestial stranger!)
To wear the name which THOU hast won—
"CÆSAR'S AVENGER"?

Blest be the days of thy sojourn,
Distant the hour when ROME shall mourn
The fatal sight of thy return
To Heaven again;
Forced by a guilty age to spurn
The haunts of men.

Rather remain, beloved, adored,
Since ROME, reliant on thy sword,
To thee of JULIUS hath restored
The rich reversion:
Baffle ASSYRIA's hovering horde
And smite the PERSIAN!

Now, let us take,—and with this selection we must be perforce content,—the most charming song of all classical antiquity, the famous Ode for Lalage, which Father Prout has rendered with inimitable grace and fidelity.

ODE XXII.

Integer vitae scelerisque purus.
Aristius! if thou canst secure
A conscience calm, with morals pure,

Look upward for defence! abjure
All meaner craft—
The bow and arrow of the Moor,
And poisoned shaft.

What tho' thy perilous path lie traced
O'er burning Afric's boundless waste,
Of rugged Caucasus the guest,
Or doomed to travel
Where fabulous rivers of the East
Their course unravel!

Under my Sabine woodland shade,
Musing upon my Grecian maid,
Unconsciously of late I strayed
Through glen and meadow,
When lo! a ravenous wolf, afraid,
Fled from my shadow.

No monster of such magnitude
Lurks in the depth of Daunia's wood,
Or roams through Lybia unsubdued,
The land to curse—
Land of a fearful lion-brood
The withered nurse.

Waft me away to deserts wild,
Where vegetation never smiled,
Where sunshine never once beguiled
The dreary day,
But winters upon winters piled
For aye delay:

Place me beneath the torrid zone
Where man to dwell was never known,
I'd cherish still one thought alone,
Maid of my choice,
The smile of thy sweet lip—the tone
Of thy sweet voice!

IV

BLANCHARD JERROLD has described the author of the Prout papers as of a race now extinct, "like the old breed of Irish wolf-dogs." It is at least certain that the pattern of his wit appears to have been lost. "An odd, uncomfortable little man," says Jerrold elsewhere, "with a roguish Hibernian mouth and grey, piercing eyes." That is also a good bit of description, showing the free touch of a contemporary, which pictures for us the "short, spare man, stooping as he went, with the right arm clasped in the left hand behind him; a sharp face—a mocking lip, and an ecclesiastical garb of slovenly appearance. Such was the old Fraserian," adds the writer, "who would laugh outright at times, quite unconscious of bystanders, as he slouched toward Temple Bar."

Prout's letters from Italy, contributed to the *London Daily News* during the brief period of Dickens's editorship, have, as we might naturally expect, rather a literary than a journalistic value. Nevertheless, they are worthy documents of the time, and the Padre shows himself no Tory in recording the progress of Italian liberation. Meantime, Ireland was struggling along in the old way (which has not yet been entirely changed for a better), and Prout evinced that his sympathies were not with a majority of his own countrymen by inditing a fierce lampoon upon O'Connell. Swift himself never dipped his pen deeper in gall than did Prout when he wrote the vitriolic stanzas of the "Lay of Lazarus." Doubtless it was inspired by honest feeling; but, as an Irishman, he might have spared adding to his country's shame. To this it may be cynically rejoined that, as an Irishman, he couldn't help doing it.

Much has been written on the subject of Prout's residence in Paris, where, during the

later years of his life, he was a marked figure. Speaking the French language perfectly, he came to be regarded by the Parisians as one of their own notables. I need not here remark that there was a truly Gallic lightness in his wit, which has induced one of his biographers to describe his mental make-up as a compound of Rabelais and Voltaire. It is certain that he took kindly to the gay Parisians, whose love of novelty and child-like enthusiasms enchanted him. Among them he passed his closing years happily enough, earning, with his pen, as correspondent for the London *News* or *Globe* sufficient for his needs. He had his lodging, and a poor one enough, in the Rue des Moulins, running out of Thackeray's famous "New Street of the Little Fields," forever associated with the unctuous ballad of the "Bouillabaisse." Here sometimes the solitary little man received the few whom he admitted to the near circle of his friendship. Ah, what would not one give to have made one of a group about

the chair of him who created the *Rev. Andrew Prout,* the lone incumbent of Watergrasshill, in the delectable county of Cork; the *Rev. Father Magrath,* elegiac poet, and the *Rev. Father Matt Horrogan,* of Blarney! When the wine flowed, and the little man, sure of the sympathy of his audience, and justly proud of his fame (*non omnis moriar*) poured forth the treasures of his learning and fancy, mingled with the lightnings of that wit which scathed wherever it glanced—what a privilege then to sit within the friendly beam of his eye, glass to glass with the decoctor of immortal punch, the wizard of many a night's enchantment! Ah, kindly reader, let us not forget that he lives and bids us ever to that favoured audience. . . .

Thackeray, in his Parisian visits, never failed to look up his old mentor of *Fraser's.* Like Prout, the author of "Vanity Fair" had served his turn as Paris correspondent for one or other of the London dailies, and well he knew the life with its gay Bohemianism, its

ill-regulated bounty and ever-recurring short commons. His long and faithful friendship with Prout, who was often trying with his friends, bears out the truth of those fine lines in which Tom Taylor repelled the charge of cynicism directed at the historian of "Esmond." Thackeray had written a book about Paris which the Padre pronounced vile, and, indeed, it can hardly be reckoned among the masterpieces of the great author. Sometimes, as often chanced with Prout, no matter how distinguished his company, a testy habit which grew upon him with age, would break out and the wit would come dangerously near to rudeness. With all his fine scholarship, Prout (to turn his own phrase against himself) too plainly revealed the "potato seasoned with Attic salt." Jerrold employs a less delicate metaphor in remarking upon the social errancies of Father Prout. "Prout, in his convivial moments," he says—and I should not quote this if he had not elsewhere written nobly and appreciatively of our author—"re-

minds one more of Cork than of Rome!" We hear of the Padre and the creator of *Colonel Newcome* hurling Latin objurgatives at each other on an evening when Prout had mixed too often his favourite concoction of cognac, lemon and sugar. In such a learned battle the Charterhouse boy would scarcely be a match for the cunning pupil of the Jesuits.

Taking a modest liberty with this legend, we may conceive the Padre softening again, what with the soothing influence of the "elements" and the honour of such comradeship, and, at an hour which shall be nameless, insisting upon seeing his great friend home to his lodging hard by in the Place Vendôme. So, there they go at last, the big man and the small—a sight worth seeing, you'll grant me —somewhat deviously to be sure, but well enough for all that—down the memorable "Street of the Little Fields." One of the things that make me love Thackeray is his kind and steady friendship for the gifted

Irishman, so caustic and sensitive, yet with his own heart filled with a great loneliness.

Now the gossips have much to say about the doings of famous men, so we learn from more than one source that less celebrated guests than William Makepeace Thackeray were favoured with an unpleasantly near view of the Padre's infirmity and carried away an intensely realised sense of the Proutian sarcasm. But it seems the entertainment was well worth the price, for few but pleasing records remain of those *noctes cænæque deum* in the Rue des Moulins.

Here, near the famous "Street of the Little Fields," the solitary little man died, in the month of May, 1866. The date seems strangely recent, for we naturally associate with him the early thirties, the period of the Prout papers. A priest of that faith to which, in his heart of hearts, he had never been recreant, knelt at his bedside and consoled his last moments. And the good Abbé Rogerson tells us: "He was as a child wearied and

worn out after a day's wandering: when it had been lost and was found; when it had hungered and was fed again."

For many years he had lived among the kindly French people, whom he loved as the poet Heine loved them. But on his death Cork claimed the ashes of her famous son. How like the end was, after all, to the beginning! For he lies at rest on the bank of that pleasant river whose murmur mingled with his childish dreams; under the shadow of the solemn spire, where the bells of Shandon ring down their benediction upon him.

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

SHERIDAN stopped writing for the stage at twenty-eight, as regards original work, having surpassed the glory of Congreve at that early age with "The Rivals" and "The School for Scandal." It is curious, too, that of this famous brace of successes the earlier and first named is the better in the depiction of character and the elements of true comedy.

Like Congreve, another though less typical Irishman, Sheridan succumbed to the fascination of society; but he never became a glorified snob, as did the former, who told Voltaire that he wished to be met as a gentleman, not as a poet! The superstition of society, with its arbitrary, often unmerited *cachet* of rank or distinction, no longer dominates the true literary man—fancy Swinburne or even Kipling giving up his work to dawdle at evening

parties or to warm a chair at a Duchess's dinners. Congreve, by the way, who loved to do such things, died a snob, leaving his very tidy savings to the Duchess of Marlborough (daughter of the terrible Sarah) who had no need of the money, while he left but a pittance to the once beautiful Bracegirdle (who had given the cold creature her love) surviving in neglect and poverty. Nothing dehumanises a man like snobbery, and intellect carries no immunity.

The parallel with Sheridan here divides, for the later Irishman lacked none of the generous virtues. But it must be granted that, even in a greater degree than Congreve (who was vastly overrated by his contemporaries) he gave to society and the bottle what was meant for mankind. He lives by the glory of his youth:—of the forty years following his splendid, and as it proved, crowning success with the "School for Scandal," there is not much to be said, in his honour. His parliamentary career was brilliant, yet left no solid

fruits. Even the celebrated speech at Hastings's trial is as good as lost, and few now believe that it merited the panegyrics of the hour. The fate of this famous address has always seemed strange to me, for Sheridan was known to take the greatest pains with his more serious efforts, while he had the reputation of anxiously rehearsing his careless after-dinner epigrams. Perhaps when he refused the offer of a thousand pounds for the copyright of the speech that Burke pronounced "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument and wit united, of which there was any record or tradition,"—he deemed it wiser to leave a legend rather than the performance itself behind him. Dramatic values were never slurred in the calculations of the manager of Drury Lane.

Sheridan wrote no more original plays after he had fully entered upon his political and social career. Dissipation, so common among the highest in that age of drunkenness, and also the Irishman's hatred of application, had

something to do with this abandonment of his natural vocation. Besides, no doubt, he feared to try conclusions with the author of "The School for Scandal," for the factitious talent of the man dreaded nothing so much as to fall below his own mark. Yet I think the controlling motive with Sheridan in these circumstances was the same as with Congreve,—a feeling that the playwright was incompatible with the man of society.

It must not be forgotten that in Sheridan's day society exercised a greater tyranny than in ours, and its authority descending from the Throne, was absolute. (In the next generation it was able to make a pariah of Byron, and he is still under sentence.) Sheridan was an Irishman, with an Irishman's hatred of being "set down" or depreciated—perhaps the most sensitive nerve of his ultra-sensitive race. He loved applause and admiration, as was natural to the son of an actor. He possessed the "social virtues," as they were then esteemed, in exaggeration; and he was mar-

ried to a lovely and gifted woman whom he fondly loved, and praise of whom was as dear to him as his own. Account should be taken of these things in judging him; yet when full allowance has been made, it must still be regretted that when he put on his dress-coat, Sheridan put off his genius; that for the honour of intimate association with the Prince Regent and Beau Brummel, he abjured the use of a talent that has not been given to a half dozen men in the history of English comedy.

Vanity, the wish to shine, is inherent in the type of Irish character that Sheridan exemplified, and it costs less effort to win the applause of a drawing-room or of a circle of boon companions passing the bottle than to burn the midnight oil by which laurels enduring are gained. The choice was desperately easy to poor Sheridan, who loved to water his laurels in the fashion then approved, as a poet somewhat late in that devil-may-care day expressed it:—

My Muse, too, when her wings are dry,
No frolic flights will take;
But round a bowl she'll dip and fly
Like swallows round a lake.
If then the nymph must have her share
Before she'll bless her swain,
Why, that's I think a reason fair
To fill my glass again!

But as I have said, social vanity was doubtless his compelling motive. In our day we have seen a scarcely less gifted countryman of Sheridan's attempting to duplicate his rôle with great brilliancy and succeeding in nothing so admirably as in his character of society wit and dandy. Oscar Wilde was indeed a very clever rather than a great man, while Sheridan had marked traits of greatness. But Wilde's refusal to lampoon English high society for a French newspaper, after that society had cast him out as a leper with a prison brand upon him, helps to fix the likeness between these two men of different generations. It is not less interesting from the

fact that "The School for Scandal" was the prototype of "Lady Windermere's Fan." Each of these gifted men made too great a set at society, plumed himself too much on such success as he achieved, and paid a bitter price for it in the end. And it is perfectly certain that but for this fatal source of dissipation and distraction, both would have done more and better work; and, I suspect, each would have escaped his catastrophe. . . .

Byron writing to Moore from Italy, recalls the times when "we used to dine with Rogers, and talk laxly, and go to parties, and hear poor Sheridan now and then. Do you remember one night he was so tipsy I was forced to put his cocked hat on him—for he could not,—and I let him down at Brookes's much as he must since have been let down into his grave." . . .

Poor Sheridan indeed! We get other glimpses of him toward the close of what was for a season the most brilliant and enviable career in England. His debts and distresses

which the factitious terrors of drink exaggerated; his tears and shame at being seized and thrown into a sponging house for debt; and finally the ironic grandeur of that funeral which was followed by princes, dukes, earls, viscounts and bishops, when his worn-out body and broken heart were borne to Westminster Abbey.

"Oh, it sickens the heart," cries Moore in a fine burst of elegiac passion,—

> Oh! it sickens the heart to see bosoms so hollow
> And spirits so mean in the great and high-born;
> To think what a long line of titles may follow
> The relics of him who died friendless and lorn!

Yet one must believe that the spirit of Sheridan, if conscious, overlooked the funeral with due satisfaction:—it was in truth for this sort of thing that he had melted the pearl of his genius in the wine-cup and survived his proper self so many barren years.

THE END