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*Title:* Reginald Bateman, Teacher and Soldier. A Memorial Volume of Selections from his Lectures and Other Writings.

*Author:* Bateman, Reginald John Godfrey (1883-1918)

*Author [prefatory note]:* Anonymous

*Editors:* Anonymous

*Date of first publication:* 1922

*Edition used as base for this ebook:* Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan; London (England): Henry Sotheran, 1922 [first edition]

*Date first posted:* 23 March 2013

*Date last updated:* August 19, 2014

Faded Page ebook#20140856

This ebook was produced by Al Haines

# REGINALD BATEMAN

## TEACHER AND SOLDIER

A MEMORIAL VOLUME OF SELECTIONS  
FROM HIS LECTURES AND  
OTHER WRITINGS

PRINTED FOR  
THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN,  
SASKATOON, CANADA  
AND PUBLISHED FOR THE UNIVERSITY BY  
HENRY SOTHERAN AND CO.  
LONDON  
1922

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN.  
CHISWICK PRESS : CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND GRIGGS (PRINTERS), LTD.  
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

### PREFATORY NOTE

The purpose of this volume is to commemorate the life and death of Reginald John Godfrey Bateman, first Professor of English at the University of Saskatchewan. It was felt by the Governors and Faculty of the University that his friends and old students would value a representative selection from the lectures delivered by him within the University and to the outside public. Included in the selection are a few poems which were found among his papers. The lectures and essays which are published here, being written for popular audiences or literary gatherings inside the University, were never intended by their author for publication as the original and considered critical work of a Professor of English; doubtless, if such had been his purpose, much that is printed here, originally hurriedly prepared during the busy rush of a college session, would have been altered and recast.

While originality was one of Professor Bateman's most marked qualities, the members of the committee entrusted with the preparation of this volume for the press have not, in every case, regarded originality of thought as a necessary qualification for inclusion. In making their selection they have rather been guided by the desire to give to his friends and old students what, whether original in thought or not, appeared to be in treatment and presentation most characteristic of the man and teacher.

War—and herein lies its greatest tragedy—always takes heavy toll of the promise and latent greatness of a nation,

its youth and vigorous young manhood. Like many others who risked all and gave all in the Great War, Reginald Bateman was cut off in his prime.

He was born in Ireland some thirty-eight years ago. His schooldays were spent under Dr. Biggs, often called the Irish Arnold, at Portora Royal School, perhaps the greatest of Irish public schools, with a tradition of scholarship which is centuries old. On leaving school he entered Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated with the Highest Honours in Modern Literature. In college his activities and interests were wide, and he was an outstanding example of the student who combines with distinction in scholarship, prominence in athletics and a broad and human outlook on life. In this as in other respects he was a worthy representative of the spirit of his University. After a few years' experience of teaching in Ireland, he was appointed to the chair of English at the University of Saskatchewan, being one of the original four professors who, with President Murray, launched the University on its educational career in 1909. When a peaceful and unsuspecting world was plunged, in August 1914, into the horrors of the most stupendous war in its history, Professor Bateman quickly decided that his place was in the fighting line, and he enlisted in the 28th Battalion in September 1914, in company with another professor and many members of our student body. His ability to handle men, quickly became apparent; he soon won his sergeant's stripes, and went to France with that rank. In 1916 he was recalled to Canada to take command of the Saskatchewan Company of the Western Universities' Battalion. He proceeded to England with the rank of major, and in 1917 reverted to the rank of lieutenant in order to get again to France, where he was wounded in action. He was holding the rank of captain in the 46th Battalion when he was killed on the 3rd of September 1918. He had taken part in the fighting toward the end of August when the Canadians made the first breach in the Hindenburg Line. The major of his battalion has written that on the end of September Captain Bateman gallantly led his company into action. Dury was taken that day, and near that place on the night of September 3rd he was killed by a shell at the Regimental Headquarters, which were being held in a chalk quarry. On the 4th of September the chaplain of the regiment gathered together a party who, "amid the roar of guns and scream of shells paid their last respects to a very gallant comrade and one of the best loved men in the Battalion."

Those who served under him as an officer bear witness that he had won not only the men's implicit confidence by qualities of leadership of the highest order, but also their very great affection by his personal qualities. The affection and respect which were the University's tribute to his character were also the tribute of his comrades in circumstances where a man's soul is stripped of all pretences in the constant presence of death, and where the dread arbitrament of war must reveal the good or evil that may lie hidden beneath the conventionalities of ordinary life. Strong in body and fearless in spirit, Reginald Bateman possessed that courage which is neither the product of discipline and rigorous training, nor the mere animal quality which (to quote an early writer on the war) "is our inheritance from a past in which men fought each one for himself that they might survive," but that finer quality of courage which will face the most appalling horrors because it has a vision of the future and a faith in the destiny of mankind.

If Professor Bateman had survived, his career as a soldier would have been but a glorious interlude in his life's work. During the years spent by him at the University, his character and attainments had made him an outstanding figure, and gave promise of a future even richer in achievement. Intellectually, he was a signal example of the union of great ability and imagination with the modesty of a fine spirit and a sane and penetrating outlook on life. He was possessed of a breadth of outlook that gave him clear insight in literary matters. His judgments were always just, because based on essentials, while his humanity enabled him to couple with the minutiae of scholarship a catholicity of interpretation and a sanity of criticism which is not always found in those who are most deeply versed in their subject. The respect of his colleagues and of his students is definite proof of his great ability as a teacher. It was manifest to all that he gave himself wholeheartedly to his work with that enjoyment and appreciation which are essential characteristics of a true teacher.

The loss that the University in general has sustained by Professor Bateman's death finds its counterpart in the personal sorrow of his friends. Those who were privileged to know him well are left immeasurably poorer by his death but enriched by a memory that will always remain with them. For "his story lives on woven into the stuff of other men's lives." His wide human interests brought him into sympathetic touch with many phases of life and gave him strength and tolerance. His true manliness, sincerity of character, and sociable nature endeared him to all. He was a delightful comrade, and many of his colleagues must remember some flash of true humour which lit up the prosaic tenor of an ordinary conversation or of some inordinately dull Faculty Meeting. The students of the University too shared in his friendship. His never-flagging interest in their activities, whether literary, musical, or athletic, will always be remembered.

The University of Saskatchewan lost in the Great War many of its finest spirits, and its losses reached their culmination in the death of Reginald Bateman.

Upon such sacrifices  
The gods themselves throw incense.

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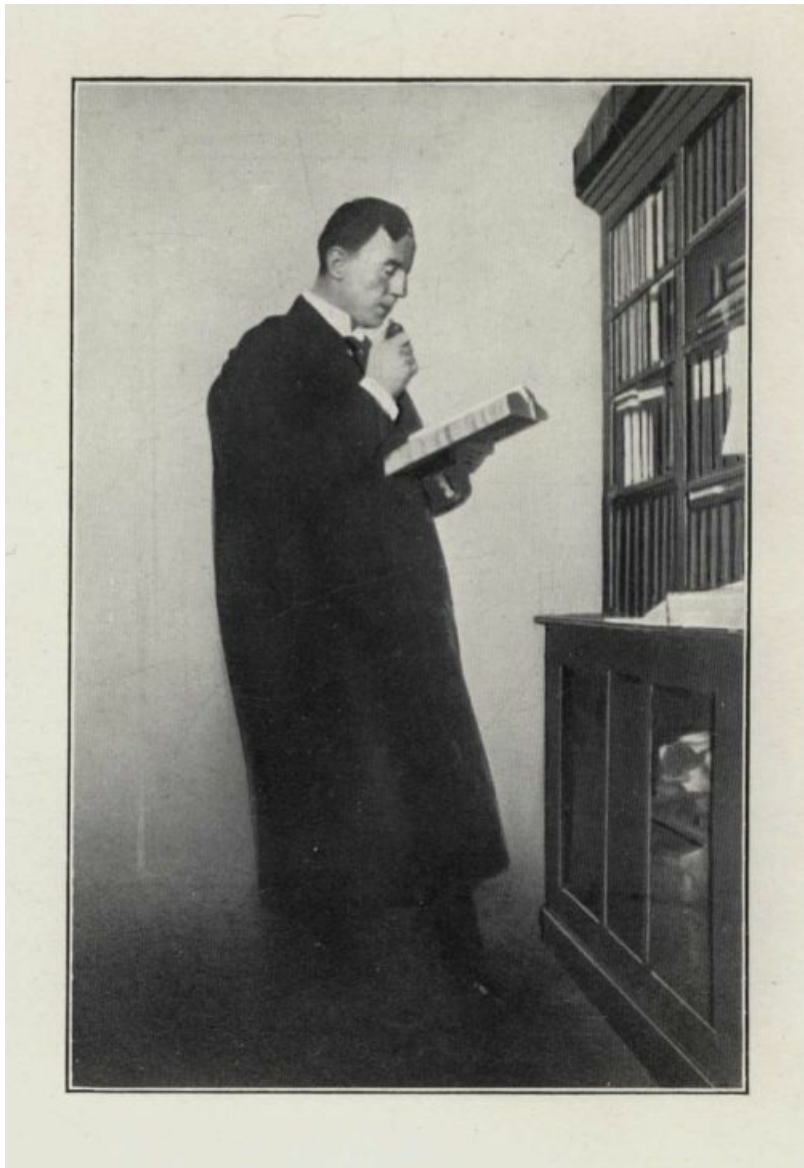
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**Reginald Bateman**

**PART I**

# REGINALD BATEMAN

## STUDENT AND TEACHER

### FRANCIS THOMPSON

*A paper given before the Faculty Club in 1913*

The recent publication, April 1913, of the first collected edition of Francis Thompson's works, followed in August by an authentic biography of the poet, has focussed general attention upon the man and his work. Hitherto, if known to the general reader at all, he has been known mainly by one poem, *The Hound of Heaven*, and the majority of the reading public has not yet discovered that Thompson is the author of a large body of poetry fully worthy to rank with *The Hound of Heaven* in poetical quality. Even to the few who are familiar with his poetry, the story of his life, one of the most romantic in the annals of our literature, came as a revelation.

To the inner circle of literary people Thompson as a poet has been known for twenty years. With his first volume of poems, published 1893, Thompson, as one admirer expressed it, "reached the peak of Parnassus at a bound." The critics, usually so conservative in their estimate of a new poet, were not only favourable, but in most cases so far forgot themselves as to become enthusiastic. For parallels to the austere passion and purity of Thompson's love-poetry, to the richness and strangeness of his imagery, the splendour and luxuriance of his vocabulary, and the loftiness of his inspiration, they turned without apology to the greatest names of our literature.

From this unusually favourable first opinion there was naturally a reaction. Thompson's second volume of 1895, *Sister Songs*, and still more his third volume of 1897, *New Poems*, with its increased symbolism and mysticism, met with vicious abuse as well as generous praise. By 1907, however, the date of Thompson's death, his reputation was well established, and from that time to the present, the tide of criticism seems to have set strongly in his favour. To-day few critics would deny him to be the most remarkable of recent poets.

A fresh wave of interest was aroused last year when the complete and final edition of his works was published. This reawakened interest is likely to have the effect of passing his merit again under review, and we shall have some opportunity of judging whether he is to fade from the sight of men like a brilliant but unlasting meteor, whether he is to be like Keats and Shelley, the chosen poet of a small and select circle of readers, or whether, like Tennyson and Browning, he is to win the suffrages of the man on the street.

Personally, while I believe that Thompson will ultimately take a place among the greatest of our nineteenth century poets, I think it extremely unlikely that he will ever be popular. The atmosphere he lives in is too rare for the ordinary man to breathe with comfort. His emotions are too subtle, his passion too austere, his harmonies too refined to catch the ear of the crowd. A few of his poems, like *The Hound of Heaven*, which is already widely known, may become popular, but I can recall no other which seems to me likely to make an universal appeal.

Before passing to a sketch of Thompson's romantic career, let me dwell for a short while on the more striking qualities of his genius. My first impressions of Thompson have to do more with style than with subject matter. To the literary critic making the acquaintance of a new poet it matters less, perhaps, what the poet says than how he says it. Harmony, rhythm, language, technique—these things are of vital importance. It is true that we may often desire of our poets "more matter and less art," but on the other hand matter without art has never won the name of great poetry. There is a largeness and finality of utterance, an appearance of inevitability about the best work of the great masters, that is unmistakable. It is as if the Muse of Poetry herself had spoken and not a mere mortal man.

Last came and last did go

## The Pilot of the Galilean lake.

Such words as these grow not upon mortal soil.

What one looks for, then, first of all in a new poet is the grand style, the authentic note, the phrases stamped with the tool of the eternal graver. In the search for it, one's only guide is instinct, an instinct formed by constant study of what is admittedly the best. And the search for this distinction of style is doomed so often to be disappointed that even a line or a phrase which seems to possess it is gladly welcomed.

But in Thompson's case the inspiration is not confined to occasional flashes. No matter where I opened his book, almost every line seemed to me to bear the hall-mark of great poetry. Take even the six lines of the dedication of *New Poems* to Coventry Patmore; you find, I think, that they ring true, that they have the great utterance.

Lo, my book thinks to look Time's leaguer down,  
Under the banner of your spread renown!  
Or if these levies of impuissant rhyme  
Fall to the overthrow of assaulting Time,  
Yet this one page shall find oblivious shame,  
Armed with your crested and prevailing Name.

In reading Thompson's poems one has neither, as in the case of most moderns, to adjust oneself to a completely new and perhaps freakish style, nor to reconcile oneself to a more or less obvious imitation of our greatest recent poets. Thompson is not at all modern; to one familiar with seventeenth century English literature he comes like an old friend; and yet he is no imitator; he is absolutely individual. If a student of literature were given the poems without being told the author, he would probably get the impression that some forgotten poet of the seventeenth century had been re-discovered. For Thompson's poems do not smack of the nineteenth century; they have few echoes of Tennyson or Browning or Swinburne or any nineteenth century poet except, perhaps, Shelley; they have rather a strong flavour of our elder poetry, and while rich, perhaps over-rich, in imagery, give one an impression of close-knit, sinewy strength very different from the milk-and-watery mildness or the sensuous lusciousness of much modern verse. This effect is enhanced by their vocabulary, which contains many words strange to the modern ear, and which takes one back to Sir Thomas Browne, Milton, Cowley, and Crashaw.

The *Ode to the Setting Sun* and the *Anthem of Earth* illustrate to some extent another very prominent characteristic of Thompson, that he is a daring and successful experimenter in metre and language. He does not follow slavishly in the beaten track of other poets; he frames metrical moulds for himself to suit the quality of his own glowing thought. The poems are full of new and difficult metres, handled with perfect mastery; they are full of experiments with language which most modern poets would not dare to make, but which in Thompson nearly always seem to justify themselves.

Perhaps the most striking thing about Thompson's poetry is the quality of his imagery. A great poet must be rich in imagery, for it is the imagery of poetry that discloses to us its hidden soul. Thompson's imagery at once astonishes by its ingenuity and captivates by its beauty. In the former quality he rivals Cowley and Crashaw, in the latter he is far beyond them. One critic remarked that Thompson must surely be Crashaw born again, but born greater. If Thompson's imagery has a fault, it is that there is too much of it; he himself recognized this fault and endeavoured to correct it. Alice Meynell remarked that many poets could be furnished with imagery, not from the abundance of Thompson's, but from its super-abundance.

Here are a few samples, chosen almost at random, of the quality of Thompson's imagery:

And now my heart is as a broken fount,  
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever  
From the dank thoughts that shiver  
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.

Under my ruined passions fallen and sere



The wild dreams stir, like little radiant girls,  
Whom in the moulted plumage of the year,  
Their comrades sweet have buried to the curls.

In a more commonplace style of imagery, but still splendidly handled, is the following from *Sister Songs*:

Or may this treasure-galleon of my verse,  
Fraught with its golden passion, oared with cadent rhyme,  
Set with a towering press of fantasies,  
Drop safely down the time,  
Leaving mine isled self behind it far,  
Soon to be sunken in the abysm of seas,  
(As down the years the splendour voyages  
From some long-ruined and night-submerged star).

The foregoing extracts impress one also with another noteworthy and very important quality of Thompson's verse—its remarkable metrical effects. Watts-Dunton rightly says that in addition to intellectual and emotional life, great poetry must have rhythmic life. Unless the rhythm of any metrical passage is so vivid, so natural, and so free that it seems as though it could live, if need were, by its rhythm alone, that passage, according to Watts-Dunton, has no right to exist as poetry. One sign by which one may know that poetry possesses rhythmic life is that passages of it will sing themselves in one's head for days after reading them. Arnold Bennett tells us that after reading *Sister Songs* he went about for days repeating such passages as:

The innocent moon, that nothing does but shine,  
Moves all the labouring surges of the world.

After reading Thompson first, I went about for days repeating over and over again passages from his poems, not for their meaning, for the meaning in many cases was not clear, but just for the sound and beat of them, such passages as:

On Ararat there grew a vine...

or

I am Daniel's mystic mountain...

Everyone knows Kipling's picture of sunrise in *Mandalay*:

An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay.

This is commonplace beside Thompson's version of the same thought in *The Mistress of Vision*:

East, ah, east of Himalay  
Dwell the nations underground;  
Hiding from the shock of Day,  
For the sun's uprising sound:  
Dare not issue from the ground  
At the tumults of the Day,  
So fearfully the sun doth sound,  
Clanging up beyond Cathay,  
For the great earth-quaking sunrise rolling up beyond Cathay.

Lastly, Thompson's poetry impresses one with a sense of sublimity, in the strict, literal meaning of the word, which is *upliftedness*. Thompson seems always uplifted to a high level of inspiration; his wing seems never to flag nor his voice to tire. The reason for this consistent loftiness of Thompson's poetry is probably that to Thompson the writing of poetry was an act of worship, and that the main spring of his inspiration is religious enthusiasm. He never wrote except when he felt that he must write. He was only, he says, the conduit-pipe through which flowed the divine utterance. Speaking of poets he says:

We speak a lesson taught we know not how,  
And what it is that from us flows  
The hearer better than the utterer knows.

In every line of Thompson's verse one finds evidence of "the vision and the faculty divine," and when after his brief period of song that vision faded and that faculty failed, he wrote no more. Thompson wrote because he must write. Like Keats he was haunted perpetually by an image of the ideal Beauty, to which he was ever striving to attain. Poetry sometimes seems to him his curse, and not his blessing.

Deaf is he to the world's tongue;  
He scorneth for his song  
The loud  
Shouts of the crowd.

He measureth world's pleasure  
World's ease, as Saints might measure;  
For hire  
Just love entire.

He asks, not grudging pain;  
And knows his asking vain,  
And cries  
Love, love, and dies,

In guerdon of long duty  
Unowned by Love or Beauty;  
And goes—  
Tell, tell who knows.

Francis Thompson was accustomed to crest all his manuscripts with the sign of the cross; and just as all his verse may be said to have been written under the inspiration of the cross, so his life may be said to have been lived under its shadow. The Hand that wrought out his destiny must have placed over its finished work the sign of mingled shame and glory, of suffering and triumph. Life was too strong for Thompson; it crushed him beneath its hurrying feet; it stunned him with its tumults; it withheld from him the love for which his soul craved; but out of the defeat of his life rose the triumph of his verse.

It seems that Thompson sank to the lowest depths of life's misery that he might rise to its highest pinnacle of inspiration. It was when pitiless London had almost crushed the life out of him, and when his eyes were blinded with pain to the things around him, that the heavenly vision was clearest. On the day when he, "poor thief of song," was nailed to his bitterest cross, he heard most clearly a voice saying, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

It was in recollection of some such mood, experienced as an outcast on the London streets, that he wrote the verses, *The Kingdom of God*, found in manuscript among his papers after his death, which illustrate as well as any other single poem the extraordinary inter-blending of the seen and the unseen in his poetry. His own words about Shelley apply with equal force to himself: "He stood at the very junction lines of the visible and invisible, and could shift the points as he

willed."

Francis Thompson was born at Preston, Lancashire, in 1859, the son of Charles Thompson, a doctor, afterwards in practice at Ashton-under-Lyne. His literary genius cannot be explained on any theory of heredity. The fact that his father seemed absolutely (and almost culpably) blind to his son's artistic nature seems to me to account in large measure for the tragedy of Thompson's youth. Later, when the son became famous, no one was more surprised than Charles Thompson, but though the success of his son's poetry must have touched his pride, it did not penetrate to his intellect, for he confessed that he was quite unable to understand it. We must, then, acquit Charles Thompson of having any act or part in his son's literary attainments; and from all accounts, his mother was equally innocent of literary talent.

But, though the poet owed none of his genius to his parents, he owed them something more important, something which proved to be the very life-spring of that genius, namely, his religious enthusiasm. Thompson is first and last a religious poet. In him and his contemporary, Patmore, Roman Catholicism, which had for centuries, almost, in fact, since the days of Dante, relinquished to poets of other faiths the chief glories of song, found a voice. The mysteries of religion were Thompson's chief inspiration, the interpretation of them his highest task. His father and mother, and the majority of his uncles and aunts were converts to the Roman Catholic Church; but whereas their spirit of worship was dumb, in Thompson all that is best in Roman Catholicism is glorified in shining verse.

Thompson, however, is not a sectarian poet. He is too great for that. It is the spirit of universal religion that breathes in his verse. The poetry of the Victorian era, which for many years had been groping after religious faith, found with Thompson the note of absolute certainty. "The people that walked in darkness saw in him a great light." "To be the poet of the return to Patmore is somewhat," he said, "but I would be the poet of the return to God."

Thompson, a sensitive, delicate child, was brought up with his two sisters, and seems to have been remarkable in childhood chiefly for his gentleness and capacity for make-believe. At the age of eleven he left the shelter of his home for Ushaw, a Roman Catholic college near Durham, where he endured at first the same miseries as fall to the lot of most high-strung, sensitive boys, when exposed to the brutalities of a large English boarding school. His was the fate of Cowper and Shelley, and in Thompson's *Essay on Shelley*, which (leaving aside its magnificence as a piece of prose writing) is valuable less for its comments on Shelley than for the light which it throws on Thompson himself, the remarks on the persecution endured at school by Shelley are suggested by Thompson's own experiences. Probably none of either Thompson's teachers or schoolfellows perceived in him the tokens of future greatness. He passed through his school-days, as in the main he passed through life, with his true self hidden from all observers under an impenetrable reserve.

Thompson's father intended him for the priesthood, and to that end his studies were directed during the whole seven years of his stay at Ushaw. Probably the training he received, particularly his study of the Missal and hymns of the Church, had no small effect upon his later verse. Though he took a high place in his literary classes, particularly in English, and though his teachers thought highly of his ability, they became gradually convinced that his nervous timidity and constitutional indolence rendered him unfit for the priesthood. The principal of the college wrote to that effect to his father in 1877, while at the same time expressing his belief that if Thompson could shake off his natural indolence he had ability to succeed in any career.

Thompson therefore returned home in 1877, to the great disappointment of his parents. The indolence which proved his undoing was, says his biographer, Everard Meynell, only "one name of many for the abstractions of Thompson's mind and the inactivities of his body." Against this indolence he struggled nobly all his life. Not a lifetime of mornings spent in bed killed his desire to be up and doing. Even in the trembling hand of his last months he wrote out in big capitals on pages torn from exercise books such texts as were calculated to frighten him into his clothes. In the morning when he woke his eyes fell upon such words as these, "Thou wilt not be abed when the last trump blows," "Thy sleep with the worms will be long enough," and so on, but all in vain. Thompson's indolence was not a mental but a physical characteristic. His poor, disordered body refused exertion and was too sluggish for all Thompson's spiritual energy to rouse. Apparently, however, this indolence and absence of mind would have caused Thompson to fail in any regular profession, and perhaps his father is as much to be pitied as blamed for his next strenuous attempt to make Francis capable of earning his own livelihood.

After Thompson's failure at Ushaw, his father decided to prepare his son for his own profession, and sent him to take a medical course at Owen's College, Manchester. For the following six years Thompson pretended to study

medicine. He made the journey from home to lectures every morning under compulsion, but once out of sight of the parental eye his day was his own, and was spent anywhere rather than at the lecture or in the dissecting room. He wandered about Manchester, an untidy, abstracted figure with trailing shoe-laces and careless dress, indifferent to passers-by, and muttering a continual soliloquy. He haunted the libraries, museums, and galleries of the city, and while his father thought his son was preparing himself to earn a competence as a respectable practising physician, the son was really equipping himself all unconsciously for the career which was to win him, not indeed a competence, but an undying name in English poetry. It was at this time, in poring over our sixteenth and seventeenth century writers, that Thompson acquired his wonderful vocabulary, which contains so many forgotten words that the critics later accused him of wholesale coinage, and which gives his verse that rich flavour of antiquity which is no small part of its charm.

At this time, too, Thompson made the acquaintance of De Quincey, "his very own De Quincey," a writer to whose career Thompson's in many respects bears an extraordinary resemblance. De Quincey naturally drew his attention to opium, with disastrous results. Opium-eating was in the air of Manchester, the cotton-spinners being much addicted to its use, and Thompson became a victim. With a short interval he was a user of opium to the end of his days. It is difficult to estimate the effect of the drug habit on Thompson's writings; personally, I doubt that it had any effect. It certainly had no direct effect, for we have his own solemn assurance that none of his published verse (except one poem, *The Dream Tryst*) was written under its influence. In fact, his first outburst of poetry came apparently as a result of his temporary breaking-off of the drug habit, after he had been rescued from the London streets; and during the few years of his poetic productiveness he seems to have freed himself from the influence of opium. Thompson thought too highly of poetry and of his mission as a poet to use opium as a stimulus to verse-making. In the latter years of his life he went back again to the drug as a relief from incessant physical weakness and misery, and who that has not suffered equally can blame him?

But though opium affected Thompson's genius little, if at all, it certainly affected his character, and made whatever was weak and slack, weaker and slacker. He proved a complete failure at Owen's College, and was given a trial at Glasgow with similar results. His father was in despair. Hundreds of pounds from his scanty income had been spent for lectures to which his son had not listened, for the fees of examiners who got no papers to examine, and for courses in dissection during which Francis had not been once to the dissecting table. Opium, however, cannot be blamed for Thompson's failure; he must have failed anyway; it only made his failure more complete and hopeless. On the other hand, it had undoubtedly in one way a beneficial physical effect. On this subject his biographer remarks: "It staved off the assaults of tuberculosis; it gave him the wavering strength that made life just possible for him, whether on the streets, or through all those other distresses and discomforts that it was his character deeply to resent, but not to remove by any normal courses."

Dr. Thompson took Francis away from college and next set him to work with a surgical instrument maker. There he remained two weeks. His next attempt at work was as agent for a new encyclopaedia. This book it took him two months to read through, and he did not sell a single copy. His father then told him that he must enlist. Thompson obeyed without a word. He was rejected as physically unfit, but not before he had gone through a weary period of marching and drill in the endeavour to expand his chest to the necessary inches. Thompson once more returned home, as he did from each successive failure, saying simply, "I have not succeeded," and vouchsafing no explanation. There were apparently no confidences between Thompson and his father; Dr. Thompson knew nothing of his son's literary ambitions. His comment when later he found his son welcomed as a poet was: "If the lad had but told me!" but it is doubtful, as Mr. Mills says, "that the worthy doctor regarded the greenest of poetic laurels as a fair exchange for a thriving medical practice."

This time Thompson's reception seems to have been unusually chilling, and in a hopeless mood he left home without saying good-bye, and started for London with no money but his fare, and with no baggage but a volume of Blake in one pocket and Aeschylus in another. Friendless, incompetent, aimless, he threw himself into the maw of the great city which has devoured so many poets, and soon plumbed the very depths of poverty and despair. For three years he drifted about London, sinking continually lower, and the astonishing thing is that he came through the ordeal alive.

His feeble attempts at finding and doing "work" soon ceased, and then he knew what it meant to walk in rags and herd with the outcasts of the street, to sleep in a fourpenny doss-house, or, if he had no money, on the Embankment, to suffer hunger and pain and cold. An attempt to establish himself as a boot-black met with the usual ill-success that attended all Thompson's practical efforts, and the time came when, for a week, his only earning was sixpence for holding a horse's head. Later still, he was on the streets day and night successively for fifteen days, and sank into a kind of stupor, moving about in a sort of half-consciousness as in a walking nightmare.

From this pitiable state he was rescued temporarily by a Mr. McMaster, a pious and kindly boot-maker who made a practice of assisting such unfortunates. He had designs on Thompson's soul, but when Thompson, even in his destitute condition, refused to allow his soul to be tampered with, McMaster wisely concluded that the next best thing was to save Thompson's body; and he did so. Thompson was taken into the shop, and proving hopeless at boot-making, was made errand-boy at five shillings a week. Here he got a chance to write, and covered the bootmaker's discarded account books with prose and poetry; and, according to McMaster, even submitted manuscripts to several magazines, but apparently without success.

Opium, the effects of which were mistaken by McMaster for those of drink, lost Thompson this situation, and he was again thrown on the streets to sink even lower than before. It was at this time that he received the indelible impressions of the London streets which he recorded years after in his review of General Booth's *Darkest England*: "A region whose hedgerows have set to brick, whose soil is chilled to stone; where flowers are sold and women; where the men wither and the stars; whose streets to me on the most glittering day are black. For I unveil their secret meanings. I read their human hieroglyphs. I diagnose from a hundred occult signs the disease which perturbs their populous pulses. Misery cries out to me from the kerb-stone; despair passes me by in the ways; I discern limbs laden with fetters impalpable but not imponderable; I hear the shaking of invisible lashes; I see men dabbled with their own oozing life."

It was at this time that Thompson, like De Quincey, was befriended by a girl of the streets, who noticed his forlorn condition and whose motherly instincts were roused by his helplessness. "Weakness and confidence, humility and reverence, were gifts unknown to her except at his hands, and she repaid them with graces as lovely as a child's, and as unhesitating as a saint's." When Thompson was finally rescued by Wilfrid Meynell, she fled from him, fearing that his friendship with her might prejudice his chances of better things. "They will not understand our friendship," she said, and then, "I always knew you were a genius." She changed her lodgings and Thompson sought her in vain.

In *Sister Songs*, in a passage addressed to Sylvia (that is, little Madeline Meynell) he pays a beautiful tribute to the childishness of this girl.

Once—in that nightmare-time which still doth haunt  
My dreams, a grim, unbidden visitant—  
\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

I waited the inevitable last.  
Then there came past  
A child; like thee, a spring-flower; but a flower  
Fallen from the budded coronal of Spring,  
And through the city-streets blown withering.  
She passed,—O brave, sad, lovingest, tender thing!  
And of her own scant pittance did she give,  
That I might eat and live:  
Then fled, a swift and trackless fugitive.  
Therefore I kissed in thee  
The heart of Childhood, so divine for me;  
And her, through what sore ways,  
And what unchildish days,  
Borne from me now, as then, a trackless fugitive.

In February 1887 came the crisis of Thompson's fate. At that time Thompson scraped together a few shillings somehow and began to decipher and put together the half-obliterated manuscript of his article on *Paganism, Old and New*, written, I suppose, at McMaster's. "I came simultaneously to my last page and my last halfpenny," says Thompson, "and went forth to drop the manuscript in the letter-box of the Catholic magazine, *Merrie England*. Next day I spent the halfpenny on two boxes of matches and began the struggle for life."

Among all the important letters that have been posted since man became a letter-writing animal, that letter of Thompson's to the editor of *Merrie England* holds, it seems to me, a prominent place. One trembles to think what might

have happened if that manuscript had never reached the editor or been overlooked by him. In all probability Thompson would have died of starvation in the streets of London, and a poet who may prove to be one of the first in our literature would have gone "mute and inglorious" to an outcast's grave. But though it lay pigeon-holed for six months without receiving the attention of a busy editor, in due course the letter and accompanying manuscript were read.

To no better man could Thompson have appealed than the editor of *Merric England*, Wilfrid Meynell, a man whose hand was ever stretched out to help the unfortunate. At present, however, he knew nothing of Thompson except that his essay showed a master-hand. After some difficulty Meynell managed to get into communication with the author through a druggist to whom Thompson owed money for opium, and many days after, Mr. Meynell, in his workroom, was told that Mr. Thompson wished to see him. "Show him up," he said, and was left alone. What follows is told in the words of Everard Meynell:

"Then the door opened and a strange hand was thrust in. The door closed but Thompson had not entered. Again it opened, again it shut. At the third attempt, a very waif of a man came in. No such figure had been looked for; more ragged and unkempt than the average beggar, with no shirt beneath his coat, and bare feet in broken shoes, he found my father at a loss for words."

Wilfrid Meynell then, with immense patience and kindness, set about the task of rescuing Thompson. Thompson was not an easy man to rescue. Reserved and secretive by habit, he made no confidences and asked no favours. He did not seem at first to realize that salvation for him was possible, and that he could earn his living by writing. At any rate, it was only by the exercise of considerable tact and patience that Mr. Meynell succeeded in obtaining any of his confidence.

Physically, Thompson had suffered severely in his long struggle with starvation. "He will not live," was the doctor's verdict, "and you hasten his death by denying his whims and opium." Meynell, however, took the risk and sent Thompson to a private hospital.

The experiment succeeded. Thompson secured a fresh lease of life, and, for the time, renounced opium. All lovers of literature owe a debt of gratitude to Meynell for his astonishing kindness and unselfishness towards Thompson at this time and to the end of the poet's life. Few would have taken the trouble, amid the cares of a busy life, to look after Thompson, who in many ways was as incapable of managing his own affairs as a child. Meynell found him work, and for the remaining years of his life Thompson secured a scanty living by his pen. His poetry brought him little, but review work and occasional articles for such magazines as the *Athenæum* gave him generally enough to live on, and anything that was lacking was supplied by Meynell.

Soon after Thompson's rescue comes the extraordinary spectacle of the outburst of his poetic talent. Here was a man of letters of the first rank whose genius had blossomed fresh and fair from the filth of the London streets. His long proximity with vice and degradation of the worst kind had not cast even a shadow on the purity of Thompson's spirit; and his poetry rose from the slums of London as stainless as Venus from the ocean.

The Meynells furnished Thompson with much of his poetic inspiration. Meynell had introduced Thompson to his own family. His wife, Alice Meynell, the poetess, became the saint of Thompson's adoration, two of the children, Monica and Madeline, were revelations to him of the beauty of girlhood; and he repaid the sheltering care and attention shown him by the family by conferring on them all he had to give, the best fruits of his genius.

To Mrs. Meynell he addressed the beautiful poems of his first volume, entitled *Love in Dian's Lap*; to Monica Meynell several of the best poems in that volume; and to Monica and Madeline his second volume entitled *Sister Songs*. His affection for Wilfrid Meynell is expressed in a few lines entitled *To W. M.*

O Tree of many branches! One thou hast  
Thou barest not, but graftedst on thee. Now  
Should all men's thunders break on thee, and leave  
Thee reft of bough and blossom, that one branch  
Shall cling to thee, my Father, Brother, Friend,  
Shall cling to thee unto the end of end.

Thompson's verses were all he had to give in return for the Meynells' kindness, and to my mind they were a rich recompense for the continual trouble, anxiety, and petty annoyances which he dealt out to his friends with lavish hands.

In the ordinary intercourse and business of daily life, Francis Thompson was not only deficient, he was impossible. The practice of the elementary habits of order and method, which to other men are the necessities and commonplaces of daily life, was to Thompson an insurmountable difficulty. His life is one long record of broken promises, unkept appointments, and other trials of the patience and tempers of all who had to do with him. He would keep an appointment anywhere from an hour or more to two or three days late, and be full of contrition, excuses, and explanations. The inherent sweetness and loveableness of the man atoned for much, but still we cannot but praise the Meynells for their unwavering kindness to this difficult genius. Wilfrid Meynell had to act continually as a buffer between Thompson and irate landladies, impatient editors, exasperated publishers, and disappointed interviewers. He had to see that the poet's rent was paid, and that he had the wherewithal to clothe and feed himself.

Thompson's incurable shabbiness and eccentricities made it difficult to introduce him into polite society, even if he had been capable of arriving in time for any social function; and though a brilliant talker when *tête-à-tête* with a sympathetic listener, in ordinary conversation he was more remarkable for the futility of his endless repetitions than for anything else. And yet he was never uncouth or awkward. His manners were gentle; his speech was that of a polished gentleman; his worn face could light up with beautiful ardour, and his frail body never lost its essential dignity. His laugh, too, was always ready at the slightest pleasantry.

He made a wildly picturesque figure as he wandered through the London streets in these latter days, generally completely unconscious of his surroundings, and with a continual muttered soliloquy. With his old brown cape, which he wore in the hottest weather, "his disastrous hat," his old satchel for review books slung over his shoulder, and his wild worn face, he looked like some picturesque pedlar who had just stepped out of a romance of the Middle Ages. In all the countless times that Everard Meynell met Thompson in the streets of London he never once surprised him in a conscious moment. That Thompson ever took the right turning or found his way home safely is a fact for which his friends could offer no adequate explanation. Mr. Lewis Hind, editor of *The Academy* while Thompson was a contributor, says: "In memory I see him one miserable November afternoon, communing with the Seraphim and frolicking with the young-eyed Cherubim in Chancery Lane. The roads were ankle-deep in slush; a thin icy rain was falling; the yellow fog enwrapped the pedestrians squelching down the lane, and going through them in a narrow path, I saw Francis Thompson, wet and mud-spattered. But he was not unhappy. What is a day of unpleasant weather to one who lives in eternity? His lips were moving, his head was raised, for above the roof of the Chancery Lane Safe Deposit Company, in the murk of the fog, he saw beatific visions."

Thompson's affection for his few friends was perhaps the brightest spot in this latter part of his life. For the rest, the record of it is mainly one of loneliness and poverty. He ate at poor tables of boarding-house or restaurant fare, he lived in comfortless rooms rendered more comfortless still by his untidiness, he had no possessions, not even books. All that he left at his death was a tin box of rubbish, "pipes that would not draw, pens that would not write, unopened letters, a lamp without a wick."

It would not be right to regard Thompson as an entirely unhappy man. I should think his hours of joy were at least as many as his hours of sorrow, and as intense. One observer speaks of him thus: "He gave me the impression of concealing within him two inexhaustible reservoirs of sorrow and joy; ebullitions from each appear in his poetry; but in his talks with me he rarely drew except from the fountain of joy." He practised in his life the "stark doctrine of renunciation" which alone can lead man to the higher levels of inspiration, and which he has stated for us in *The Mistress of Vision*. In this poem the "Land of Luthany" represents for Thompson the poet's supreme vision.

Thompson's worst trial was not being able to write poetry. For the last six years the consolations of poetry, as well as the pains of poetry, were denied him. After the volume of 1897 his Muse deserted him, and he would not sing without inspiration. With the exception of a few occasional pieces, he wrote, in these later years, nothing but prose, prose as fine in its way as his poetry.

In November 1907 Thompson's rare spirit was set free from the fetters of his worthless body. "He left to those who

loved him," said Meynell, "the memory of an unique personality and to English poetry an imperishable name."

I shall conclude with a very brief review of Thompson's work. Francis Thompson's writings are not remarkable for their bulk. Three fair-sized volumes hold them all. What is remarkable about them is the consistently high quality of both prose and poetry; they both possess the stamp of distinction, the master-touch, the great utterance.

Of the prose perhaps the finest thing is the Essay on Shelley, but Thompson seemed incapable of writing anything that was not fine. Within certain limits he seems to me to be a critic of the very highest calibre. A complete and sound literary theory could be put together from his critical essays.

The poetry was published in three volumes during Thompson's lifetime. We saw that it was the first volume of 1893 that took the literary world by storm, and justly so. It is nearly all magnificent. Besides *The Hound of Heaven*, by general consent the greatest religious poem and one of the greatest odes in the language, and *The Dead Cardinal of Westminster*, it contains a series of love-poems of the very highest quality addressed to Alice Meynell, some exquisite verses on children, and many other gems. Thompson's love-poems are among the finest in our language, but are not, of course, love-poems in the ordinary sense of the word. They express, as one critic said, "a sort of sublimated enthusiasm for the beauty of womanhood," and their enthusiasm was linked to Thompson's religion by being for him an earthly type of his adoration of the Virgin Mother, the crown and pinnacle of idealized womanhood.

The second volume, published in 1895, consisted of one long poem in two parts, *Sister Songs*, addressed to the sisters Monica and Madeline Meynell. The first part seems to me to be spoiled by over-luxuriance, but the second is grand poetry. One short quotation must suffice:

Eve no gentlier lays her cooling cheek  
On the burning brow of the sick earth,  
Sick with death, and sick with birth,  
Aeon to aeon, in secular fever twirled,  
Than thy shadow soothes this weak  
And distempered being of mine.  
In all I work, my hand includeth thine;  
Thou rushest down in every stream  
Whose passion frets my spirit's deepening gorge;  
Unhood'st mine eyes-heart, and fliest my dream;  
Thou swing'st the hammers of my forge!  
As the innocent moon, that nothing does but shine,  
Moves all the labouring surges of the world.  
Pierce where thou wilt the springing thought in me  
And there thy pictured countenance lies enfurled,  
As in the cut fern lies the imaged tree.  
This poor song that sings of thee,  
This fragile song, is but a curled  
Shell outgathered from thy sea,  
And murmurous still of its nativity.

Thompson's third and last volume was published in 1897, under the title *New Poems*. This volume contains some of his longest and most elaborate compositions. Like many of the poems in Volume One outside those already noticed, the most important poems of Volume Three are expressions of Thompson's religious mysticism, and with this is combined a free use of symbolism derived from the Hebrew Prophets and the Eastern mythologies. Although no one can fail to recognize the splendour of the poetry in this third volume, a full appreciation of it requires a somewhat special equipment. "The main region of Mr. Thompson's poetry," says Patmore, "is the inexhaustible and hitherto almost unworked mine of Catholic philosophy." To one not specially versed in that philosophy, an attempt to give an appreciation of the poems is a dangerous task, and one full of pitfalls.



Suffice it to say that Thompson's mysticism is not an apparently aimless plunging about in the darkness of the void like that of Maeterlinck and other modern mystics. Thompson's mysticism was kept within bounds and given a definite direction by common sense and the authority of the Church. "Dante," he said, "is a perfect rebuke to those who believe that a mystical genius must be dissociated from common sense. Every such poet should be able to give a clear and logical prose *résumé* of his teaching as terse as a page of scholastic philosophy." And so we find that the rule of Thompson's practice is summed up in the words, "To the Poet life is full of visions, to the Mystic it is one vision." Having regarded the visions as a poet, and set them down as a mystic, he would call them one. The one great vision enfolded and explained them all. Such is the explanation of his poems, *The Orient Ode*, *The Anthem of Earth*, and *The Ode to the Setting Sun*.

To treat Thompson fairly one should give his deeper poems careful study, but Thompson does not always write of deep and doubtful things. More often indeed his faith is as the faith of a little child. We are told on high authority that we must become as little children if we are to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It was as a little child that Thompson sought to enter there, and it is among the children of Heaven that Thompson would take his place.

To his godchild he writes:

And when, immortal mortal, droops your head,  
And you, the child of deathless song, are dead;  
Then, as you search with unaccustomed glance  
The ranks of Paradise for my countenance,  
Turn not your tread along the Uranian sod  
Among the bearded counsellors of God;  
For if in Eden as on earth are we,  
I sure shall keep a younger company:  
Pass where beneath their rangéd gonfalons  
The starry cohorts shake their shielded suns,  
The dreadful mass of their enridgèd spears;  
Pass where majestic the eternal peers,  
The stately choice of the great Saintdom, meet—  
A silvern segregation, globed complete  
In sandalled shadow of the Triune feet;  
Pass by where wait, young poet-wayfarer,  
Your cousined clusters, emulous to share  
With you the roseal lightnings burning 'mid their hair;  
Pass the crystalline sea, the Lampads seven:—  
Look for me in the nurseries of Heaven.

## MILTON

### AN UNDERGRADUATE POEM

From out the darkness of the vanished years,  
The voice of Milton peals; his mighty song  
Rings down the centuries, its note still strong  
As when it burst upon our fathers' ears.

Amid the unnumber'd harmonies that swell  
From bards of earth to break round heaven's throne,  
His part, clear heard amid the mingled tone,  
Rolls full and solemn, like a deep-voiced bell.

A spirit strong with more than mortal strength,  
When in life's battle he had borne his share,  
He passed from out the tumult and the care,  
And climbed upon the mountain tops at length.

There, with blind eyes turned to the Promised Land,  
Waiting the dawn of an unending day,  
His soul went forth in that tremendous lay  
The eternal heights and breadths and depths which spanned.

Poor, lonely and forgot, though he endured  
The bitter thought of labour spent in vain,  
And saw invaded by a godless train  
The land whose liberty he deemed assured;

Yet not for that did he "abate one jot  
Of heart or hope"; scorning to cringe or cower,  
Steadfast he stood like some majestic tower,  
That feels the tempest's blast, but wavers not.

From rulers of the earth he asked no grace,  
Nor leaned upon the love of human heart,  
Lofty and passionless he drew apart,  
And communed with the Highest face to face.

Far from the din and toil of mortal kind  
His spirit's barque was borne; serene and high  
He brooded on the unfathomed mystery  
Of thoughts that burden the Eternal Mind.

For Freedom he had stood, in her defence  
His best had given; where'er the fight was keen,  
Ever amid the foremost had he been  
Down-bearing tyranny's battalions dense.

For that he left his ease and hopes of fame;  
Endured the heat and burden of the day;  
And while his lyre mute and forgotten lay,  
Laboured to clear from wrong his country's name.

And now, that task fulfilled, his voice once more  
Breaks forth into a fuller, richer song,  
"Not changed to hoarse or mute," sublime and strong,  
The noblest heard among the sons of men.

A strain full worthy of his subject high—  
Sin, Death, and Hell, and our eternal woe;  
The gloomy majesty of Heaven's great foe,  
Hurling defiance to the vaulted sky;

The work of Christ, Immortal Son of God,  
The warring hosts of fiends to darkness hurl'd,  
Creation and the birth of this round world,  
And man brought low beneath th' Almighty rod.

His throne is set where the immortals are,

Where Dante, crowned with laurel, smiles serene,  
And Virgil wears his garland ever green,  
And Homer shines undimmed, a fadeless star.

## TO THE MEMORY OF DR. BIGGS

### AN UNDERGRADUATE POEM

An old Portora boy's tribute to the late Dr. Biggs  
(accidentally drowned in Lough Erne, July 1904)

Calm was the evening; and the lake as calm  
    Showed not a ripple on its placid breast;  
Peaceful was Nature, when the one we loved  
    Passed quietly to his rest.

Not racked by pain, nor marred by fell disease,  
    He bowed beneath the Almighty's chastening rod—  
With heart at ease, and praise upon his lips,  
    He went to meet his God.

The tears and anguish of the bed of death  
    A loving Father spared his closing eye—  
The gentle murmuring waters sang his dirge;  
    The soft winds breathed a sigh.

Not far were ready hands and loving hearts—  
    His voice they heard not, nor his peril knew;  
Alone God met him; and that solemn scene  
    Was veiled from human view.

O raise him gently from the wat'ry depths;  
    And gaze with reverence on that noble head  
Stamped with the beauty of a lofty soul,  
    A spirit that is fled.

All lines of grief, all trace of human care  
    Death's kindly hand has smoothed from his brow;  
And perfect peace alone and holy calm  
    Are seen there now.

Weep ye no more, sad mourners; let us cease  
    To wail the sudden stroke with idle breath;  
Pure was his life; his soul seven times refined  
    And ripe for death.

With eyes that strove to pierce the veil of time  
    And view the Unseen, he ran his mortal race;  
The veil is passed; with clearer vision now

He sees Him face to face.

Perhaps some coming grief, some sorrow dread  
Or wasting sickness, fraught with heavy woe,  
The All-seeing saw, and stretched His saving arm  
To snatch him from the blow.

Weep not for him, but for ourselves bereft  
Of a strong champion in this earthly strife;  
A rock to which his weaker brethren clung  
Amid the storms of life.

Weep not for him, but mourn for those young lives  
Orphaned so soon of teacher and of guide;  
The flock left shepherdless, their loved one's form  
Torn quickly from their side.

Where, in the wide world, shall we find again  
So wise a counsellor, a friend so true?  
Nay, cease regrets, but let us up and strive,  
As he has done, to do.

Still from the grave he speaks; revealed by death,  
Shines clearer forth the beauty of his life;  
Still the good fight he fought gives us new strength  
To conquer in the strife.

## **THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH**

*Two Lectures given to the Class in Education  
in the University*

### **LECTURE I**

In this lecture I propose to tell you not how English ought to be taught, but simply how I teach English. I know nothing of pedagogy; I have never attended a Normal School; I have read very few books on teaching in general, and only one on the teaching of English in particular; I know nothing of the methods which you yourselves are being taught to employ. I ask you, then, to take my lectures simply as a personal document, a relation of what I have gathered from my own experience. Such a document, if sincere, must be valuable, and I need, I think, make no apology if I mention as discoveries of my own, methods and principles which are, perhaps, commonplaces with the educationalist.

In the matter of teaching every man must work out his own salvation; I believe that he cannot take his methods ready-made from another. The method which suits me and gets me the best result may not suit you. And so, though I believe that every teacher of English ought to follow certain general principles which I will try to lay down, I believe also that it is a fatal mistake for any man to attempt to model his way of teaching exactly upon that of another. To-day, then, I propose simply to tell you of some of the things which I discovered for myself, some of the difficulties I met with, some of the faults which I have overcome, or am still trying to overcome.

I see before myself still a long and weary road, which must be travelled before I reach anything approaching my

ideal. In fact, I hope, as every teacher ought to hope, that I shall never reach a point where I can say I am satisfied, for as sure as I do, I shall know that I have ceased to make progress. As long as a man struggles, he is advancing; when he ceases to struggle, he has ceased to advance; and when he ceases to advance, it is almost certain that he has commenced to go backward.

For the purposes of this lecture I shall take the teaching of English to mean the teaching of English literature only. I have had no experience of High School work, and therefore my remarks refer to the teaching of average University students of the first or second year, very much the same sort of students as you have to deal with in your High Schools. The methods I adopt with my Honour Classes differ widely from those I use with pass students.

Before one attempts to describe his method of teaching, he should make very clear his conception of the object for which the subject is studied. One may read a piece of literature, for example, in many different ways. One may treat it as a piece of art, a record of life, a truth that some fellow-man has seen in a moment of clear-sightedness, has "snatched from the eternal silence," and has set down that we may see it too. Again, one may read it with a view to its structure, as an example of literary technique; or one may treat it as an historical document, a reflection of the spirit of the age which produced it; or, again, as an exercise in philology, as material for the study of words. According as one object or another predominates, so will the method of teaching change; if one object is sought to the exclusion of all others, the method of teaching will, of course, vary with the object in view. The philologist will subordinate everything to the study of philology; the historian will fasten all his attention on the evidences of date, the local references, the flavour of contemporary philosophy, politics, religion, or whatever it may be; the technician will be entirely occupied with form, metre, structure.

*Hamlet*, for example, may be treated as a work of art, as the history of a man doomed to destruction through an inherent and fatal flaw, a human soul caught in the web of circumstance and tortured to death; or it may be treated as a study in the language of the Elizabethans; or as an example of the stagecraft of Shakespeare; or even as material for constructing ingenious cipher messages revealing the fact that, as Shakespeare was utterly unable to write plays for himself, Bacon kindly wrote them for him.

The first question which the teacher of literature must ask is, what is the relative importance of all these objects for which literature may be studied. Which should be the main end of our teaching, and which should be subordinate? On the answer he gives to that question will depend the method of his teaching.

Personally, I have no doubt whatever as to which of these things is the most important, although I may have some doubts as to the relative importance of the others. To me a piece of literature is first and foremost a work of art, a record of life in forms of truth and beauty, a spiritual revelation; it speaks to my intellect, but only that, through my intellect, it may reach my heart. If it reaches my intellect only, if it penetrates no farther, if it does not become part of my being, if the experience it records does not become *my* experience, then it is of little value to me, it is not *my* piece of literature, and I want no literature that I cannot make my own.

I wish sincerely that we could root out for ever and utterly abolish the false notion that most students and many teachers have, that Literature is not an important subject, that it is only a side-line, very nice to know something about, but not in the same class with "useful" and practical subjects like history and science. This is a tremendous and a fatal misconception. It is by Art and Art alone that Humanity progresses; progress in Science or in mere knowledge does not necessarily mean progress in any of those things in which Man stands supreme above the rest of creation, those spiritual qualities which raise him to the level of the Divine. We know that a man may take a course in Science, or any purely intellectual subject, and come out at the end of it still uncultured and coarse-minded, with low ideals, with the higher instincts undeveloped; he may go through a course of Literature, too, it is true, and emerge in a similar condition, but not if the Literature has been properly presented to him, and if he has really assimilated the best thoughts of the highest minds.

Art is the source of our highest pleasure, the capacity for which raises us above the beast. Without that capacity, men are no better than sheep or goats "who nourish a blind life within the brain."

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,  
Its loveliness increases; it will never

Pass into nothingness; but still will keep  
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep,  
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

Not only is Literature the source of our highest pleasure, but it is the source of our highest development. It is the most potent factor in the slow process of raising Humanity to a higher spiritual level; it is the true motive power of the world.

Well might the poet say of himself and his fellow poets:

We are the music-makers,  
We are the dreamers of dreams,  
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,  
And sitting by desolate streams;—

World-losers and world-forsakers,  
On whom the pale moon gleams:  
We are the movers and the shakers  
Of the world for ever it seems.

One man with a dream, at pleasure,  
Shall go forth and conquer a crown:  
And three with a new song's measure  
Can trample a kingdom down.

Assuming, then, that the appreciation of literature as art, as the record of spiritual experience, is the principal thing to be gained from its study, the question arises how is such an appreciation to be taught?

In what I am going to say on this subject, I will speak of poetry, and you will understand my remarks to apply in a lesser degree to prose.

Poetry is the finest flower of the human mind; and therefore the most difficult of all things to appreciate. In writing poetry the whole of a man's being is in a state of intense activity. His intellect, his emotion, his imagination, are all roused to the highest pitch. He is lifted for the time being to a plane of experience much higher than the normal; he is giving out the very best that is in him.

Wordsworth has described for us how the poetic mood drove him distracted with intensity of thought over hill and dale, and how when the mood had passed he would return to his friends pale and utterly exhausted both in mind and body.

His own mind did like a tempest strong  
Come to him thus and drove the weary wight along.

All poetry worth reading is the result of some such exalted mood as that, and poetry so written cannot be read in cold blood. Poetry which leaves you cold, with your emotions untouched, which does not in some measure lift you out of yourself, is either not poetry at all, or else poetry which you have not the capacity to appreciate.

One appreciates a poem only in so far as one reproduces it sympathetically in oneself; that is, only so far as one feels over again the emotions which the writer who produced it felt as he gave them expression. In other words, by the appreciation of literature one gains at second-hand the highest spiritual experience.

It follows that one can appreciate poetry only to the extent to which one is capable of such experience. No one can appreciate fully all kinds of poetry; if any one could do so, it would mean that he was a universal genius, since the whole range of emotional experience would have to be within his control. The extent of the average man's powers of appreciation is distinctly limited; some can sympathize only with the more obvious and elemental emotions, while some are capable of appreciating more subtle and refined shades of feeling. That is why nearly every one can appreciate to some extent a poet like Shakespeare, who always deals with big, elemental emotions, although, since Shakespeare is at the same time able to express the most subtle feelings, there are few who can appreciate him in full. This is why it is more difficult to appreciate Wordsworth than Shakespeare—Wordsworth's emotions are more out of the range of ordinary experience—and still more difficult to appreciate Shelley, whose range of emotion is often entirely alien from experience.

The point I wish to make is that a teacher can teach properly only poetry which he himself is capable of appreciating, and therefore literature is the most difficult of all subjects to teach, since it requires in the individual certain qualifications beyond the merely intellectual. For the lack of these qualifications, no brilliancy of intellect can compensate.

The teacher who knows a piece of poetry with his head only can never teach it as it ought to be taught. He may be able to repeat it word for word, he may know all about its history, its philology, its structure, but if he has not felt it, if he has not reproduced it sympathetically within himself, he cannot teach it. Similarly the student, unless he is capable of sympathizing with such emotions as are recorded in poetry, will be unable to get more than a head knowledge of it. If this power of sympathizing is present in ever so small a degree, it can be indefinitely developed under the inspiration of a good teacher.

What follows then? First, that a teacher who lacks the higher appreciation of literature can certainly never teach it to others, although probably thirty or forty per cent. of his pupils, more gifted than himself by Nature in this respect, will get an appreciation in spite of him. Secondly, that even supposing a teacher has this appreciation, it will be of little use to him, unless he has the power of communicating it to others, that is, of awakening in them sympathy with what he himself feels.

Assuming, then, that the teacher has this appreciation, what is the best way of communicating it? There are, perhaps, only two possible ways. One is by talking about the poem, by trying to describe its effect upon one; but the better and more effective way is by reading, by vocal interpretation. All literature, but especially poetry, is written not for the eye, but for the ear. Its appeal, then, should be made, not through the eye but through the ear. The sound of the words, not singly, but in groups, the rhythm, the intonation, all these give the atmosphere of a poem. Sound is to a poem what colour is to a picture. Get away from the printed word, the mere symbol; it means something for the head, it is true, but nothing for the heart until it is translated into sound.

The first thing a teacher of literature must do, then, is to learn to read. He need not take a course in elocution; stamping, gesticulating, waving his arms, shouting, whispering, hissing, and other tricks of the professional elocutionist will benefit him little; all that is necessary is that he should be able, by the intonation of his voice, to convey to his students the effect which a poem has made upon himself. Diligent practice, the subjection of the voice to the will—these are what he needs. The average man cannot hope to reach any very high degree of efficiency as a reader, but all that the teacher needs is to be able to read clearly, with a voice well controlled and capable of expressing various shades of emotion, with a good sense of rhythm and the grouping of vowel sounds.

The first thing, then, for one who would teach literature is to endeavour to reach at least that stage of vocal culture which I have described. Of course, a good deal may be done in the way of conveying appreciation of a poem by talking about it, but to talk about a poem well is almost as difficult as to read it well, and at the best is not nearly so effective.

Assuming that a man is equipped with these essentials, a true appreciation of literature and the power of communicating his appreciation to others, how is he to approach the teaching of a piece of literature?

The first thing he must do is to assimilate it thoroughly himself, to go over it again and again, to practise again and again the vocal interpretation of it, to be sure that he has caught the spirit not only of the whole, but of the smallest part, that no shade of meaning, however subtle, has escaped him.

"We must long inhale," says Corson, "the choral atmosphere of a work of genius before we attempt, if we attempt at all, any intellectual formulation of it; which formulation must necessarily be comparatively limited, because genius, as genius, is transcendental, and therefore outside the domain of the intellect."

Then, having assimilated it, let him go further and get a background for it. Let him know, if possible, its history, what suggested it, under what circumstances it was composed, its relation to other writings of the poet and of the age, what the best critics have said about it, and so on. Let him endeavour to neglect no scrap of information which will increase his own appreciation and understanding of the poem. When he has done all this, then, and not till then, is he ready to teach it. If he has plenty of time and a small class, he will probably begin by trying to find out how far his pupils have assimilated the spirit of the poem. His task is then to interpret the piece of literature, to try to give the student the impression it has made on him, what it means to him, what emotions it arouses in him. This is to be done by reading it, or, if the piece is long, by reading such parts of it as will form a connected whole, filling in with descriptive narrative. In many cases it will be necessary before attempting an interpretation to say a few words which will enable the pupil to listen to the reading in the proper frame of mind, and will create the proper atmosphere for him.

When the first impression has been made, the work has only just begun. Suppose one has hit the right keynote, that the class has caught the spirit of the poem; there will still be much of it which is unintelligible or misty to them.

Not realizing this, I used to make a mistake when I first began to teach. I thought it was necessary that the pupils should understand the poem in detail before they could get the general effect. I used, therefore, to begin by analysis, by pulling the poem to pieces, showing its structure, the order of ideas, the meaning of words, and when I thought everything was perfectly clear I would give the general effect, or very often would leave that to the students themselves. This was a fatal mistake. By going through the process of analysis first, I had rendered an appreciation of the piece as a whole ever so much more difficult; while if I had begun by trying to get the general effect, and had succeeded, no amount of analysis could have destroyed that first impression.

On this point Professor Corson says: "The spiritual appeals which are made by every form of art, be it in colour, in sound, in stone, in poetry, or whatever may be the medium employed, must be responded to directly, immediately (in the literal sense of the word), or not at all. Of course, the extent of the response may be indefinitely increased. But there must be, to begin with, a direct, immediate response, however limited it may be. There is no roundabout way to such appeals. The inductive method is not applicable to spiritual matters. The very word *induction*, is absurd, in connection with the spiritual. It belongs exclusively to the intellectual domain."

When the first impression has been made, then will come the analysis, and I am convinced that this analysing process is one which the student, especially the young student, cannot dispense with, and which is an exceedingly valuable mental training.

The analysis will include a treatment not only of the literary form of the poem, but a thorough study of its language, of the historical and literary allusions contained in it, of any images or metaphors which may be obscure, and, in fact, anything which will contribute to a better understanding of the poem as a whole. The teacher will now probably ask: "How far is this process of analysis to go? Must one study the philology of every word, must one analyse the metre of every poem?" I have already given the answer to these questions. I said that the analysis would include a study of anything which *will contribute to the better understanding of the poem as a whole*. There is the secret. The total effect must never be lost sight of. The metre is to be studied only to an extent which will enable the student to catch the rhythm and read the poem correctly for himself. Names and technicalities matter not a whit. He may never have heard of an iambic pentameter, or an anapaest, or a trochee, but as long as he grasps the rhythm and sees the relations of the various parts of the literary structure, he knows all that is necessary for a thorough appreciation of the poem as a whole. Similarly, the derivation of a word should never be given unless it helps to the better understanding of the sense of the word *as that word is used in the particular passage under discussion*; otherwise the obtrusion of the etymology is simply an impertinence.

Some teachers make interpretation by paraphrase a prominent part of this analytical process; this should be avoided. It may be necessary sometimes to paraphrase difficult passages, but not one-tenth as often as most teachers and editors consider it necessary. A paraphrase is at best an inferior rendering, a substitution of something similar, but of a lower kind, often a substitution of the baldest prose for the highest poetry. "I pray thee avoid it." Some editors are over-



fond of analysis; probably because they wish to show they are earning the money they get for editing. Let the poem, as far as possible, tell its own story in its own words.

When the analytic or discursive process has been completed, what remains? A return to the general. Having considered the poem in its parts, one now endeavours to reproduce the effect of the poem as a whole, but this time, if the analysis has been well done, the effect ought to be greatly heightened. The student will now see, not through a glass darkly, but will meet the poet face to face.

There are two things to be observed with regard to this process from the general, through the discursive, back to the general again. One is that the processes should, if possible, be kept separate; that one should keep, if possible, at the same level throughout any one lesson. This cannot be done if one changes from appreciation to analysis and back again on the same day. The second is that the analytic process is best left as far as possible to the student himself. I myself used to make the mistake of doing too much for the student; I used to try to analyse the poem thoroughly for him in class. I now think it better simply to point out difficulties and leave them to the student to solve, to suggest questions and leave them to the student to answer. The work may not be so thoroughly done, but the student receives a valuable stimulus which he would otherwise miss. I always give an opportunity for any difficulties which the student is unable to solve for himself to be brought to me.

## LECTURE II

In my last lecture I tried to emphasize what I considered to be the most important objects of literary study, *i.e.*, the appreciation of literature as art. I said that I thought it necessary that the teacher of English should have both a true appreciation of literature himself and the capacity for arousing appreciation in others. I pointed out that the teacher's first duty was to awaken in his students a response to the inner life or soul of the piece of literature with which he was dealing, that the best way of doing so was by a good vocal interpretation; and that it was therefore the duty of every teacher of English to learn to read well. I suggested that after the first response had been gained, there should come a thorough analysis, a study of form, structure, philology, and exact meaning, but that this process of analysis should be carried only so far as was necessary to a thorough appreciation of the work as a whole.

I now come to the question of how far a study of the history of literature is desirable for the ordinary student, I mean the student who does not desire to specialize in the subject.

Personally, I am a firm believer in the historical method of dealing with literature, not only because I think that a knowledge of the history of literature greatly heightens one's appreciation of literary works, but because I believe that many students, who would otherwise never do so, are by this method led to take an interest in, and so gradually acquire a taste for, literature.

Some books (using the word *book* in the sense of any literary work) are for all time—Homer, Virgil, Dante, Milton, Shakespeare; some books are for their own time only; some books are for their own time and a limited period afterwards. But whatever be the vitality of a book, no matter to which of these classes it belongs, there is no doubt that it belongs in the first instance to its own time, and cannot help being to some degree a reflection of the spirit of the age in which it was produced. This means that not only may the book be used as an historical document, as a means of catching the spirit of its age, but that, conversely, a study of the epoch at which it was produced cannot fail to illuminate to a greater or less degree the meaning of the book.

Critics like Taine and Sainte-Beuve looked on books as primarily historical documents. Behind the book one looked for the man, behind the man one found the innumerable circumstances which went to mould his personality. In this way of looking at things the individual becomes of comparatively small importance; he is interesting mainly because he is a type of his age; his book is interesting because it reveals the type.

Much can be said for this deterministic way of looking at literature, and some excellent results have been produced by Taine's style of criticism, but few critics of to-day would look on it with favour. To-day, the book is of primary

importance; the man and the age are studied that they may throw light on the book. However exaggerated the historical method, as carried out by Taine, may appear, I think we must admit that in a modified form it may be of very great value.

We all know that a literary work is flavoured by the personality of the writer. From our experience as teachers we learn that we can read a personal document more sympathetically if we know who wrote it.

I have sometimes commenced to read an essay under the impression that it was written by a student A, and have been annoyed at certain ways of thinking and methods of expression that seemed to me forced and unnatural; I have turned to the back of the essay, seen the name of the writer, discovered my mistake, and re-read the essay with the personality of B instead of A at the back of my mind, and then the essay seemed to me to go smoothly, and to be characteristic of the writer.

Undoubtedly, the book takes a distinct and peculiar tinge from the personality of the author, and therefore to get the proper atmosphere, to read a book with thorough sympathy, we should find out all that we possibly can about the man who wrote it. Of course, the thing works both ways. We study the man that we may better appreciate his book; we study the book to find the man. How little can be done in some cases towards determining the personality of the man from his book is shown by the outstanding instance of Shakespeare. More than three hundred years' study of that marvellous book has entirely failed to reveal the personality of the author; upon that question critics are still in hopeless conflict.

Again, since the personality of a man is undoubtedly moulded, to a large extent, by his age and environment, we should go farther back still, and having studied our man, we should relate him to his age.

No writer is so individualistic that he can wholly escape the tinge of his epoch. I will venture to say that no one who has been accustomed to study literature by the historical method, and to recognize in books the contemporary flavour, would be likely to take, say, a piece of prose written in the first half of the seventeenth century for the product of the eighteenth or nineteenth century, or could possibly mistake a typical sixteenth-century lyric for a typical nineteenth-century one.

If we study our literature, then, historically as well as artistically, our books will be to us not only works of art, but something more; they will become linked to long trains of association, which will carry us out into the life and happiness and suffering of our fellow-men, and further still, out into the shock and sway of great world-movements, into the sphere where the Time-spirit weaves unceasingly the web of life.

Let me give you an example of how this way of treating literature can be carried out with even a junior class.

I have been studying with the Freshmen some of Goldsmith's poetry, *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*. We first took the poems in themselves, studied them as works of art, read them, tried to get the spirit, then analysed and studied them in detail. We next went on to a study of the life of Goldsmith. We followed his strange and romantic career, followed him in his sufferings and struggles and triumphs, saw him in his weakness and in his strength. Further than that, we saw him in relation to his contemporaries. We became acquainted through him with the famous circle of which he was a member, the circle of wits and scholars that gathered round Johnson—Burke, Reynolds, Garrick, and the rest. We then learned something of the literary ideals of that school, and how they determined the form of Goldsmith's work. We saw, too, how Johnson and Goldsmith helped to set literature free from the bonds of patronage. We saw something of the politics and the social conditions of the age.

My claim is that, in consequence of that study, those students, when they return to *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village* to read them again for their own pleasure or to review them for their examination, will find their pleasure in them greatly enhanced by having at the back of their minds the personality of the author and the spirit of his time. Things that seemed stiff and pedantic to them before will be forgiven or passed over now, because they will know that they do not belong to Goldsmith himself, but are only a condition of his writing imposed on him by his age; they will appreciate better all those passages in which the kindness and sympathy and generosity of the author are strongly marked, and finally they will feel hovering around these living documents not only the spirit of the dead author, but the spirit of the great old Doctor Johnson, with the spook of Boswell probably still in attendance, and all that noble and witty company who walked and talked on earth so many years ago.

I have heard people object to the study of the history of literature by young students on this ground—that it must mean to a large extent a memorizing of names and dates, a mere empty repetition of facts about works that have never been read.

To that objection I do not now attach very much weight, although at one time I did. In the first place, the study need not be a mere empty repetition. A skilful description of the contents of a work will give a student a very fair idea of its spirit and meaning, and often arouse in him a desire to read it for himself. In the second place, it is good for him that he should have the benefit of the experience of the most competent students and critics of English literature, so that he may know what is best worth reading, and so that when he comes to continue his studies for himself, if he ever does, he may spend his time to the best advantage. One does not object to studying the map of a country, even if there is no intention of visiting all the places marked thereon.

I would say, then, that the best plan with the young student who has had some elementary training in the appreciation of literature is to take some representative works of a particular period, and through a careful study of them in the way I have described, reach out and grasp the whole period in its essential features.

So much for the history of literature. Now to retrace our steps, and return to what I said in my first lecture about the method of attacking a particular literary work. I daresay it sounded simple and easy enough; first get your general effect, let the poem make its own impression as a unit, as a work of art; then will come your analysis, and then a return to the general.

But it is in the application of this simple principle to different kinds of literature that the teacher will find his greatest problems. Every new work will provide a new puzzle. How much need I say about this by way of introduction? What is the best way to present this? What illustrative extracts should I make from this? How much help should I give the student with this?

A teacher has to teach the First Book of *Paradise Lost*. He has three quarters of an hour or an hour to make his first impression; on that first impression may depend the whole success of his teaching. It is obvious that with young students it will not do to plunge straight into a reading of the poem; they must be prepared for the reading; an atmosphere must be created; they must come to the reading in a proper, receptive attitude. How much introduction is necessary?

Personally, I spend one whole hour talking about the poem. I point out as well as I can the plan of the whole poem, and how that plan is carried out, so as to get the relation of the First Book to the whole; I talk a little about epic poetry in general and what one is to expect from an epic poem; I point out the magnitude of Milton's task, the spirit in which he approached his work, the purpose and meaning of that work, and in every way I try to arouse an attitude of interest and expectancy.

The next day, I do not begin to take up Book I in fragments, but I give a reading designed to give the story of the whole book in a series of the most striking passages, strung together by connecting narrative.

We are now ready to study the poem analytically, and as we take up each part and dissect it, the students always have in view the relation of each part to the whole book, and, from the first lecture, to the whole poem.

How to teach a play of Shakespeare is a subject that might well demand a whole lecture to itself. Shakespeare is undoubtedly the best material for teaching literature that we have, and is suitable for all grades, from the lowest to the highest. Of course, I need scarcely say that the method of treatment and presentation for honour students will naturally differ entirely from that appropriate to beginners.

But there is one thing certain, that a play of Shakespeare, whether one teaches it to beginners or to advanced students, demands on the part of the teacher a most intense study. He must be soaked in it; he must be thoroughly familiar with it down to the smallest detail; he must have thought out the setting of every scene; he must have formed a clear conception of every character; he must have decided definitely the exact tone and emphasis with which every speech should be delivered; and lastly, he must decide how he may most effectively present it to his students.

But this, you will say, is putting too big a demand upon the teacher. It is a demand which few of us are able to fulfil, but I am convinced myself that every teacher should keep such an ideal in view, and work toward it patiently. I have

been studying *Hamlet* off and on myself for ten years, I have been teaching it for four, and I am only just beginning to get some confidence about it now. I hope perhaps if I study it for ten years more to be able to teach it with some success.

The great actor Salvini studied the part of Lear for eight years before he made any attempt to commit it to memory.

Shakespeare is thus, in a sense, the most difficult of all authors to teach, for one can never exhaust him; in another sense he is the easiest, for even the poorest teacher cannot help making some effect with him. The latter fact, however, should not make us content with slovenly work.

In this connection I may say that I am convinced that the greatest aid to success on the part of the teacher of English literature is painstaking and exact study for himself—not to be content with something that will do, but to absorb and reabsorb the spirit of the best works, and never to be satisfied that he knows them well enough. The number of works that he can know thus thoroughly will be limited at first, but their range will be constantly increasing; and therefore the work that he will be compelled to do in a more or less imperfect fashion will be constantly decreasing.

As an example of how a single poem can be made sometimes to serve as an introduction to the whole of an author's work or to a large portion of it, let us take a very short and simple poem of Browning and see what can be made of it. Let me read to you *A Woman's Last Word*.

Probably this poem, like many of Browning's, produces at the first reading only a vague and indefinite impression, a sort of groping sensation, in short, a wonder as to what it is all about.

Let us analyse it. Whence did the difficulty arise? Evidently not from the language. It was from the fact that we did not know what went before; that from what is given us here, a mere scrap of experience, we had to construct the whole; and from the fact that we had to follow a sequence of thoughts suggested by circumstances unknown to us, instead of, as is usual in poetry, a series of actions or events which serve as a backbone or substructure for the thought.

Herein lie the two main difficulties of appreciating that large class of Browning poetry known under the heading, *dramatic monologues*.

They are *dramatic* because they are spoken not in the person of the author, but in that of some imaginary character, whose personality the author assumes, but they differ from drama, as it is generally understood, first, because they are monologues, not dialogues; secondly, the circumstances, occasions, and settings of the monologues, instead of being suggested at the outset, are only indicated from time to time, and have to be picked up as we go along; thirdly, we have to follow a sequence of thoughts without any help from accompanying events or actions; and lastly, we are given no information, except incidentally, as to what goes before and comes after.

In other dramatic monologues of Browning the problem becomes more complicated, first, from the fact that in most of them he attempts to reveal a character, not merely a psychological situation, as in *A Woman's Last Word*; secondly, from the extraordinary variety of the characters he attempts to present.

The characters into whose mouths Browning puts his poems are a very varied assortment. In one poem, perhaps, it is a Greek philosopher who speaks, in the next a modern English divine; now it is an Italian duke of the sixteenth century, and now an Italian patriot of the nineteenth century. Each of these personages has a definite atmosphere and a typical environment, and that atmosphere and environment we must construct for ourselves before we can appreciate the poem properly.

Take, for example, the two poems, *Fra Lippo Lippi* and *Andrea del Sarto*. Each of these deals not only with the character and some of the history of an individual Italian painter, but sets forth in addition a particular phase in the development of Italian art, and at the same time gives us an insight into Browning's theory of art. To appreciate these poems, then, we must know something of the history of the historic personages who are represented as speaking, something of the Italy of their time; we must know in outline at least something of the history of Italian art, and have some knowledge of the technicalities of painting. Very many of Browning's poems are concerned with periods and personages about whom the ordinary reader knows nothing, hence the absolute need of some sort of a commentary, or of constant recourse to an encyclopaedia in reading him.

There is another difficulty connected with Browning's favourite form, the dramatic monologue. Most of these poems are only scraps of experience; we get no information, except by hints, of what has gone before; we are equally left to guess what comes after. The problem before us is something like that of reconstructing a whole conversation of which we have overheard only a small part.

Again, many of the poems do not describe a series of events, but only a series of thoughts or reflections. Hence there is nothing or very little to guide us in grasping the connection between the various parts of the poem, and many of the poems have to be read and re-read many times before the meaning begins to dawn on us.

In *A Woman's Last Word* there is not a single difficult phrase. The whole difficulty arises from the fact that it is a scrap, and from the fact that it is a series of thoughts without any action to thread them together and to make them definite.

Browning's poems are sometimes difficult to read because the ideas which he is expressing are profound and difficult to grasp; but far more often they are difficult because of his extraordinary way of expressing perfectly simple and easy ideas.

For example, here is a perfectly easy and obvious thought—that every day we see men winning money and reputation by mere imitation of some style that has caught the public taste, while the original inventor or discoverer of that style lives in obscurity and neglect. How does Browning express it?

Hobbs hints blue—straight he turtle eats,  
Nobbs prints blue—claret crowns his cup,  
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats—  
Both gorge. Who finished the murex up?  
What porridge had John Keats?

The point about the murex in this extract illustrates another difficulty with Browning, his assumption of knowledge on the part of his reader of all sorts of curious and out-of-the-way information. He is full of allusions to technical points in such things as painting, music, medicine, and classical scholarship which are as a rule known to only specialists in these particular subjects.

I might mention lastly in this connection a peculiarity of Browning's thought, namely, its tremendous rapidity. Let me illustrate. A beginner works out a problem in mathematics; he feels his way step by step; he puts down everything in order, and in going over the question we can follow easily every detail of the reasoning. A master mathematician confronted with the same problem would see his way from the beginning right through to the end; he would leave out half of the intermediate steps because to him they were quite obvious and not worth putting down, and when we came to look over his work we might completely fail to see how he had reached his conclusion.

So with Browning. Browning skips from thought to thought with great rapidity, leaving intermediate steps to be filled in by the intelligence of the reader. As Chesterton says, if Browning had to describe a quarrel between two men which culminated in one calling the other a liar and knocking him downstairs, he would probably do it something like this:

What then? You lie—and doormat below stairs  
Takes bump from back.

That is to say, he would be in such a hurry to get his man to the bottom of the stairs that he would leave out half of the intermediate steps.

I have given you this fairly full discussion as an example of how a rather difficult thing may be done, namely, how a single poem may sometimes be used to give an introduction to a poet and prepare a class for reading the remainder of his work.

Before I close let me give you a couple of things I have discovered about teaching which may be useful to you.

First, it is more important to be physically fit than to be well prepared. If you feel well and look it, your class will be in good humour even if you are not well prepared. Be worried and tired, and your class will soon become worried and tired too. Secondly, it is better to teach too little than too much. Do not subject your class to mental indigestion. Thirdly, one should always try to appear interested. Lastly, one should never appear to be in a hurry. Nothing annoys a class more than to be rushed madly from point to point without a breathing space.

## MY LAST DUCHESS

*A paper given in 1911 to a Church Society that wished  
guidance for literary study*

In this poem Browning takes his subject from the midst of the Renaissance period in Italy, a period when the revival of classical learning was accompanied by a breakdown in the authority of the Church. The conventions of ages were swept away in a few years, and side by side with the new culture, scepticism, cynicism, robbery, lust, and murder prevailed in high places, even in the palaces of the Popes themselves. Under a thin veneer of culture, society became rotten to the core.

The word *Ferrara* at the head of the poem gives us the clue to the period. Ferrara is an ancient Italian town, and was at one time the seat of a powerful duchy. The ancient ducal palace still frowns down from its eminence upon the country around. The Duke of Ferrara at the period of our poem was one of the most powerful noblemen of Italy.

The speaker in this monologue is the Duke of Ferrara, a typical Renaissance product, cultured and cold and cruel. He is showing the picture of his late wife to an envoy from some Count or other who has sent to negotiate a marriage for his daughter with the widowed Duke.

The first thing to do with a poem like this is to make it live. We will read it.

The character we have represented here is one probably not uncommon at the period. The Duke is a man of intellect, imbued with the new culture, a critic and collector of art treasures. He combines with this appreciation of art, an utter selfishness and cynicism. His heart is incapable of tenderness or emotion. He has an immense pride in his rank and in his ancient name, and an impatience of anything that would derogate from his dignity.

Can you picture him, the polished old villain, as he stands before the picture of the girl he has cruelly done to death and points out its beauties with delicate jewelled finger? On his cultured but sensual features the critical appreciation of a connoisseur for the skill of the artist mingles with some recollection of and pride in the beauty of his former duchess; but of affection there is not a sign, of remorse not a trace.

He married a young girl who probably was contracted to him by her parents without having any voice in the matter. He bestows on her his name and rank, and in return demands—*everything*, her abject submission to his every whim, her complete indifference to everything and everybody but himself. It was too much. The poor girl could not crush all the humanity out of her heart, nor the vitality out of her body. The Duke saw, with cold disapproval, her fresh interest and pleasure in all around her, her delight in every attention that was offered her, her ever-ready smile. He wanted all these things for himself, and for nobody else. That smile must be for him alone. But unfortunately the Duchess liked whatever "she looked on, and her looks went everywhere," she had a kind word and glance for everybody.

This grew; I gave commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together.

In other words, he did away with her, had her murdered, an easy thing for a man of his power at this epoch. First,

however, he had her portrait painted. If he could not have the Duchess all to himself, he could at least have her picture entirely his own,

... since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I.

He is thinking now of marrying again. Some Count snaps at the bait, the chance of this magnificent alliance for his daughter. Better to kill her with his own hand than to let her pass into the clutches of the Duke. The Duke's object in showing the envoy the picture is probably partly to get the opportunity of letting him know in time what he expects from his wife, so that when the messenger returns he may warn his young lady to keep her smiles under strict control.

Notice how Browning indicates the attitude of the envoy. First he is struck by the marvellous face of the Duchess—

The depth and passion of its earnest glance.

At last he essays a word in her defence,

Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling?

and when the Duke has finished, he sits a little stupefied at the revelation that has been made, and still gazing at the picture. Even when the Duke rises he does not stir, and the latter has to rouse him, a little impatiently, "Will't please you rise?"

To me the most striking thing about this poem is its suggestiveness. It suggests infinitely more than it expresses. It expresses merely a fragment of a conversation; it suggests a whole tragedy.

Browning has, in these few lines, with delicate and curious skill, given us first the Renaissance atmosphere, a mixture of culture and refinement, delight in art and beauty, with immorality and crime; he has suggested to us the characters of the two actors in the drama from which this poem is but a fragment, the polished and cynical Duke and the girl who is sacrificed to his position and wealth; he has even suggested the mixture of deference, loathing, and fear with which the envoy listens to the Duke's description. There are anatomists who from a single bone of any animal will construct the whole skeleton; and so from this scrap which Browning has here given us we can construct the complete drama.

The poem is, as I have remarked, typical of a whole class of Browning's poetry. These poems are usually called *dramatic monologues*, but perhaps the title given to them by Stopford Brooke is on the whole more suggestive. He calls them *imaginative representations*.

These poems are, in the first place, the utterance of one person, at a single time, and in one place. Some individual is influenced or induced by some unusual opportunity or circumstance to reveal himself. The veil which conceals his inmost heart is lifted for a moment and we get a glimpse into its depths.

They have a certain dramatic element. Browning himself styled this poem a *dramatic romance*. They are dramatic in that they are objective as regards the author; the poet is not uttering his own thoughts. The circumstances under which the monologue is spoken are usually dramatic (*i.e.*, such as a playwright might choose to bring out some trait of character), the background, scenery, and even the action is vividly suggested, and there are usually subsidiary figures whose attitude towards the central actor is carefully indicated.

The chief point to notice about these poems is that the poet studies not merely an individual as such, the working out of passion in a single soul, but he takes that individual as a type of some special period, some phase of historical development, some special era of thought. It was Browning's way of using history for poetical purposes, and it was completely his own. This poem is not a very good example, because the personages and events described are not peculiar to any one epoch, but may occur wherever there are two people unhappily married. But even here we have in the Duke not only an intensely interesting, even if objectionable, type of human being, but the concentrated essence of a certain side of the Italian Renaissance.

Browning, in his series of *imaginative representations* has covered a big field. *Artemis Prologuizer*, *Caliban on Setebos*, *The Bishop Orders his Tomb*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *A Death in the Desert*, *Cleon*, and many others cover an immense range, from Greek mythology through early and late Renaissance down to the modern life of Europe. "The poet can place us with ease and truth at Corinth, Athens or Rome, in Paris, Vienna or London, and wherever we go with him we are at home." Scenery, character, time, place, and action are all suitably and harmoniously blended, the characters are vividly alive. The qualifications which Browning brought to these poems were, first, a wide historical knowledge, not so much of separate events as of the main trend of thought in a given period; an intense imaginative power; a wide knowledge of human nature; and last, but not least, in his Italian poems, a familiar acquaintance with "a multitude of small intimate details of the customs, clothing, architecture, popular dress, talk and scenery of the towns and country of Italy from the thirteenth century to modern times." The poem under consideration gives us only a glimpse of the skill with which Browning handles this particular type; but I hope it will be sufficient to induce those who are not acquainted with Browning's other work to study it further.

## CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

"O whither are you going,  
My friend, I'd fain be knowing,  
O whither are you going  
With that air of do-and-dare?  
O what the destination  
Of your grim determination,  
Of your bloody resolution  
And your fierce defiant stare?"

"I am going Christmas shopping,"  
Said the hero, freely mopping  
Beads of nervous perspiration  
From his broad and gallant brow,  
"I am going forth to-day  
In this bellicose array  
To do my Christmas shopping,  
Or to perish in the fray."

\* \* \* \* \*

"O whence are you returning,  
My friend, I'd fain be learning,  
O whence are you returning  
With that bloodstained weary air?  
With that battered shirt and collar  
And without a single dollar,  
And with piles of useless lumber  
That would make a dustman stare?"

"I have done my Christmas shopping,"  
Said the hero, almost dropping,  
"You may send to fetch the doctor,  
Though I cannot pay his fee;  
My story is romantic,  
For the fight was fierce and frantic,  
And I bought a lot of articles



I didn't even see;  
But I've done my Christmas shopping  
(For I take a lot of stopping),  
I have done my Christmas shopping,  
And that's enough for me."

## REALISM IN WORDSWORTH AND BROWNING

*A paper read to the Faculty Club during the  
session 1911-12*

What is Realism? Realism means what it says—truth to reality and fact. The realist expresses imaginative conceptions in terms of the actual world around him, in terms of the objects which he can see and describe accurately; the idealist gets away from fact, and creates an imaginative world which differs from the real.

The idealist who writes of love, talks about raptures and bliss and gates of heaven; the realist describes the wave of the girl's hair, the colour of her dress, the way in which the man stands and looks, and leaves the reader to supply the emotional background. The idealist who writes of death talks about ashes to ashes, dust to dust, the common goal of mortality, the gate of everlasting life; the realist describes the sick man's ghastly pallor, his wavering pulse, his gasping breath, the clock ticking out the minutes in the silence of the chamber of death.

A realist in fiction like Balzac or Flaubert or their imitator, Arnold Bennett, seems almost photographic in the accuracy of his descriptions; and yet so artistic is the selection of the details described that though we get the impression of absolute reality, the emotional atmosphere is often intense. Realism, when well done, is an admirable literary method, but it may and often does degenerate into a vice. In the hands of Zola it becomes a medium for the conveyance of sickening, sordid, or disgusting detail.

The kind of realism with which I wish to deal is *realism in poetry*—the phrase seems almost a contradiction in terms—and I am taking for my purpose certain phases of the work of Wordsworth and Browning.

Wordsworth and Browning, two poets in many respects direct antitheses of one another, are not usually classed together in any way. There is, however, one class of poetry which Browning was the first to develop to a large extent, in which Wordsworth may be said to have been a pioneer; in fact, Browning actually succeeded in a kind of poetry of which Wordsworth barely saw the possibility. I do not mean to suggest that Browning was in any way a disciple or conscious imitator of Wordsworth; but that we see in full flower in Browning's poetry a certain artistic method of which in Wordsworth's poetry we can just perceive the germ.

The kind of poetry to which I refer is one which is frequent in Browning, and which, in fact, has often been regarded as not poetry at all—I mean such utterly unpretentious, prosaic, uncouth, rough, or at times even grotesque verse as we find in poems like *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, *Mr. Sludge the Medium*, *Old Pictures in Florence*, *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha*, much of *The Ring and the Book*, and Browning's later work generally. Such verse produces the effect of an exact reproduction of the actual. It is so realistic that it seems at times lacking in art.

No work which is an exact, or nearly exact, reproduction of the actual can be a work of art. A work of art is based on man's experience of what is, but is always modified and altered by his conception of what ought to be.

It was here that Wordsworth failed. His realistic poetry is too close to the actual. The intensely realistic effect of Browning's poems is an illusion; otherwise his claim to be a poetic artist disappears in so far as these poems are concerned.

I wish to indicate the nature of these effects, and to inquire how far Browning was anticipated by Wordsworth.

Wordsworth was perhaps the chief representative of the Romantic School—the title given to the group of poets who dominated English Literature at the commencement of the nineteenth century. The spirit of the age to which their work gave expression was one of question and revolt, the spirit which found its most remarkable political expression in the French Revolution. Question of established beliefs, revolt against established rules and conventions, was the keynote of literary as well as of social and political life.

The attitude of the Romantic School is indicated by its name. Romance is that element in literature which appeals to the sense of the marvellous in man, which awakens his capacity for wonder. In the eighteenth century, under the régime of Pope and the Classical School, wonder had been dead. It was an age of acceptance and submission; acceptance of certain definite conventions, submission to certain fixed rules. Correctness was more desired than imagination, and polish than originality.

It was against the barren conventions and narrow outlook of the Classical School that Wordsworth and his fellows revolted. The spirit of wonder toward Nature and toward Man sprang into new life.

My meaning will be illustrated by the following lines:

A primrose by a river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more.

They might have been written of Pope. What was the primrose to Wordsworth?

To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

I do not wish, however, to talk to-night of Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature. It is with just two aspects of the Romantic Revolt that I have to deal, one relating to subject matter, the other to form.

The poet's eye in Shakespeare's time

Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

With Pope, poetry was confined mainly to man as he exists in society, and was largely concerned with satirizing social defects; Wordsworth dealt with men as human beings, as mysterious manifestations of the infinite, creatures trailing clouds of glory, coming we know not whence, going we know not whither. To him, as to Burns, rank and station were nothing. Any human being, however humble, was worthy to be the poet's theme. He claimed for the misfortunes of Lucy Gray or the miserable mother, the Idiot Boy or Peter Bell, the same consideration as Sophocles for the sorrows of Oedipus and the lofty line of Thebes.

Gray, an eighteenth century poet in whom romantic tendencies are found, shows the same spirit in the *Elegy* when he writes of the humble dead who lie beneath the soil:

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;  
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile

The short and simple annals of the poor.

Wordsworth, then, enlarged the scope of poetry to include any human experience, however humble.

There was another side to Wordsworth's revolt. He revolted not only against the limitations of subject imposed on the poets by eighteenth-century ideals, but also against the limitations of form. Pope and his followers had been poets of practically a single metre, the heroic couplet. Their tricks, mannerisms, and phraseology had been exalted into a *poetic diction*, or, rather, jargon, by countless imitators, and poems written in any other style were not allowed admission to the best company. A field, for example, had to be either a *verdant mead* or a *grassy sward*, or it could not decently make its appearance in poetry. As late as the beginning of the nineteenth century a rainbow is to Campbell *Heaven's ethereal bow*, and a musket becomes, in poetical dress, a *glittering tube*. Wordsworth claimed for the poet the right of using the language of everyday life, plain, simple, and unadorned.

Such is a very brief and insufficient outline of the two main points in Wordsworth's *poetic theory*, which were developed at great length by Wordsworth himself in his prefaces and by Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria*.

It is to just one small part of Wordsworth's *poetic practice* that I wish to draw your attention. I mean certain studiously simple and realistic poems written in deliberate illustration of his theories. The first of them were published in the famous *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798, a work which burst like a bombshell upon an astonished literary world, and aroused more scorn, indignation, and controversy than perhaps any other volume of poetry ever published.

The *Lyrical Ballads* was in the nature of a challenge. It contained an announcement of Wordsworth's new theories, together with illustrations of them by himself and Coleridge. Many of the poems were admirable, but in many others Wordsworth is at his worst.

A generation brought up in the principles of Pope and nourished on such verse as *The Pleasures of Hope* could not away with poems like *The Idiot Boy*, or *Alice Fell*, or even *We Are Seven*.

There is no doubt that Wordsworth went much too far in his zeal for the new theories, and was unfortunately without a sense of humour which might have saved him from absurdities. As an illustration of Wordsworth at his worst, let us take *The Idiot Boy*, one of the poems in the *Lyrical Ballads*. The very outline of the plot would make the ghost of Pope rise in indignation from the grave. Old Susan Gale, a peasant woman, is very ill. Her neighbour, Betty Foy, comes to attend on her, accompanied by her only son, Johnny, an idiot. Susan gets worse, and the doctor must be sent for. Betty dare not leave her, and so the only alternative is to send the idiot boy to fetch him. I need not complete the story, but will quote a few stanzas from the poem:

But when the pony moved his legs,  
Oh! then for the poor idiot boy!  
For joy he cannot hold the bridle,  
For joy his head and heels are idle,  
He's idle all for very joy.

And Susan's growing worse and worse,  
And Betty's in a sad quandary;  
And then there's nobody to say  
If she must go, or she must stay!  
She's in a sad quandary.

"Oh Doctor! Doctor! where's my Johnny?"  
"I'm here, what is't you want with me?"  
"Oh sir! you know I'm Betty Foy  
And I have lost my poor dear boy  
You know him—him you often see;

"He's not so wise as some folks be."  
"The Devil take his wisdom!" said  
The Doctor looking somewhat grim,  
"What, woman, should I know of him?"  
And grumbling, he went back to bed.

This from a poet who could write *The Solitary Reaper* or *Milton, thou should'st be living at this hour*, or such magnificent philosophical poetry as we find in *The Prelude*, *Tintern Abbey*, and *The Excursion*, where Wordsworth treats of

the mind of man,  
The haunt and the main region of my song;

or such splendid descriptive passages as are scattered everywhere through his works, visions worthy to rank with Shakespeare's

Cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces.

Other examples of Wordsworth's simple style are all too numerous, and may be found in such poems as *Peter Bell*, which relates the story of a tinker and a donkey (in parts an admirable poem), *Alice Fell*, which tells the sorrow of a little girl for her tattered cloak, *The Brothers*, and *Michael*. These are not, by any means, all bad; in fact, when Wordsworth can forget for a while that he is writing to illustrate a theory, flashes of his natural style break out, producing odd effects of incongruity. Some of the poems which appeared in the *Lyrical Ballads* are admirable, such as *Her Eyes are Wild* and *The Affliction of Margaret*.

To us who have, since Wordsworth's time, been trained to a wider scope of appreciation in poetry, it will seem strange that even the worst of them should have aroused such adverse criticism, but even to us it is evident that Wordsworth in them is not at his best, that he is writing a style which is not natural to him. And yet it was these poems which, for a time, attracted most attention from Wordsworth's contemporaries, and prejudiced Byron, Horace Smith, Peacock, and many others against his greater poetry.

Wordsworth, though he failed in his attempt, had got hold of a true idea—that the most common things in life are pregnant with poetry, and that there are many subjects, not susceptible of ordinary poetical treatment, which may yet be handled in such a simple, unpretentious way as to retain their essential outlines, while the emotional element is subtly indicated rather than actually expressed. As a very ordinary landscape will be transformed into a thing of beauty under the rays of the setting sun, so commonplace subjects may take on a new appearance under the influence of the poet's imagination. Care must be taken, however, not to idealize too much. It would be impossible, for example, to lift such a subject as *The Idiot Boy* into the realm of the ideal.

Now if we turn to Browning, we find that he also deals with subjects of this kind. Let us consider his treatment of one or two of them. In *The Spanish Cloister* he takes as his subject the mean and petty jealousy of one commonplace monk for another. Or, again, he takes a sick man, stretched on his death-bed, putting aside impatiently the ministrations of the parson, as his half-dazed thoughts go back to a rather sordid love affair which was yet the brightest spot in his past. Other examples are *Sludge the Medium*, and the cynical and worldly Bishop Blougram endeavouring after dinner over the nuts and wine to justify his appearance of orthodoxy to Gigadibs, the scribbler and shallow rationalist:

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.  
No deprecation—nay, I beg you, sir!  
Beside 'tis our engagement: don't you know,  
I promised, if you'd watch a dinner out,  
We'd see truth dawn together?—truth that peeps  
Over the glass's edge when dinner's done,  
And body gets its sop and holds its noise

And leaves soul free a little. Now's the time—  
 'Tis break of day! You do despise me then.  
 And if I say, "despise me,"—never fear—  
 I know you do not in a certain sense—  
 Not in my arm-chair for example: here,  
 I well imagine you respect my place  
 (Status, *entourage*, worldly circumstance)  
 Quite to its value—very much indeed  
 —Are up to the protesting eyes of you  
 In pride at being seated here for once—  
 You'll turn it to such capital account!  
 When somebody, through years and years to come,  
 Hints of the bishop—names me—that's enough—  
 "Blougram? I knew him"—(into it you slide)  
 "Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day,  
 All alone, we two—he's a clever man—  
 And after dinner—why, the wine you know—  
 Oh, there was wine, and good!—what with the wine...  
 'Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk!  
 He's no bad fellow, Blougram—he had seen  
 Something of mine he relished—some review—  
 He's quite above their humbug in his heart,  
 Half-said as much, indeed—the thing's his trade—  
 I warrant, Blougram 's sceptical at times—  
 How otherwise? I liked him, I confess!"  
*Che ch'è*, my dear sir, as we say at Rome,  
 Don't you protest now! It's fair give and take;  
 You have had your turn and spoken your home truths—  
 The hand's mine now, and here you follow suit.

Could anything be more easy, conversational, realistic? And yet every now and then we find throughout the poem touches of the noblest poetry introduced so skilfully that there is no sense of incongruity. For example, the Bishop in the course of his argument says that absolute unbelief is just as impossible as absolute faith.

And now what are we? unbelievers both,  
 Calm and complete, determinately fixed  
 To-day, to-morrow, and for ever, pray?  
 You'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think.  
 In no-wise! all we've gained is, that belief,  
 As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,  
 Confounds us like its predecessor. Where's  
 The gain? how can we guard our unbelief?  
 Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here.  
 Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,  
 A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,  
 A chorus-ending from Euripides—  
 And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears  
 As old and new at once as Nature's self,  
 To rap and knock and enter in our soul,  
 Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,  
 Round the ancient idol, on his base again—  
 The grand Perhaps! we look on helplessly—  
 There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—  
 This good God—what he could do, if he would,

Would, if he could—then must have done long since:  
If so, when, where, and how? some way must be—  
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit  
Some sense, in which it might be, after all.  
Why not, "The Way, the Truth, the Life?"

Browning's love poetry does not properly enter into this discussion, since love is a common theme of poets, and this discussion deals with Browning's treatment of apparently unpoetical themes; but Browning's choice and treatment of situation in his love poems are so unusual as to bring them into the same class as his other realistic poems. Take as an example:

See, how she looks now, drest  
In a sledging-cap and vest.  
'Tis a huge fur cloak—  
Like a reindeer's yoke  
Falls the lappet along the breast:  
Sleeves for her arms to rest,  
Or to hang, as my love likes best.

These few examples will serve to show that the essential principles of Browning's realism and Wordsworth's are the same. Browning, like Wordsworth, claimed for poetry a greater licence both in subject matter and in form, but he went farther than Wordsworth in both. Wordsworth took for his new subjects the humble joys and sorrows of the poor—but all was fish that came to Browning's net. Any psychological situation, any out-of-the-way corner of human experience, became in his hands matter for poetry. Then as to form, Wordsworth merely refrained from the conventional language of poetry, but Browning boldly used language that was frankly unpoetical—uncouth, unmusical, rough, rhyming grotesquely, accented outrageously. Perhaps his most important advance on Wordsworth was in the use of the dramatic form—nearly all Browning's poems of the sort described are dramatic monologues—for when the speaker is professedly not the poet, we are less inclined to find an incongruity in unpoetical language. Browning, by adopting the dramatic form, gets at things from the subjective point of view, from the inside. Wordsworth tried to describe them objectively from the point of view of a spectator.

Browning, then, practically discovered a new poetical form which enabled him to bring within the scope of poetical treatment subjects never so treated before. He found a new field for poetry and found new forms to suit it. He entered land which Wordsworth had only beheld from afar, and which, indeed, Wordsworth never could have entered.

Browning saw that familiar objects, everyday doings and sayings, commonplace happenings which seem to the ordinary observer prosaic and barren, are, to the poet, pregnant with underlying emotion.

Ordinary poetry deals with the obviously poetical things, or converts the everyday things of life into poetry by depriving them of some of their actuality. Browning contrives to give us things as they are, with all the harshness and crudeness of real life, and yet to make us feel the underlying element of poetry. About his most brutally realistic poem, there is a subtle atmosphere of emotion.

Browning, like Shakespeare, dares to place side by side the grotesque, the beautiful, the tragic, the ludicrous. He can do it by virtue of his unassuming form. Take, for example, *Old Pictures in Florence*. There we get the dirt of the old streets, the very must and smell of the second-hand dealer's stores, the filthy canvas and peeling fresco, but we get also the tragedy of the wronged Old Masters, and a noble conception of the development of art.

In *Bishop Blougram* we get the wine, the nuts, the plausible conversation, but we get also the spectacle, pregnant with emotional possibilities, of two human midgets in the presence of the Almighty, the one daring lightly to compound with his Maker, the other lightly to deny Him.

The value of this inquiry, if it have any value, is to show that those poetical forms which are often assumed to be due to a radical defect in Browning's work as poetry, were really a deliberate artistic method, deliberate in the sense that Carlyle's style is deliberate. The style, with both Carlyle and Browning, is indeed the man, but each had to find the style which would express him best. Carlyle, in his early work, wrote like Macaulay; Browning, in his early work, wrote like Shelley. And whenever Browning, in his later poems, met with a subject capable of conventional poetical treatment, he did not hesitate so to treat it.

I need only instance such poems as *Saul*, *Abt Vogler*, *The Guardian Angel*, and *Prospice*. I shall quote the last of these poems:

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,  
The mist in my face,  
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote  
I am nearing the place,  
The power of the night, the press of the storm,  
The post of the foe;  
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,  
Yet the strong man must go;  
For the journey is done and the summit attained,  
And the barriers fall,  
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,  
The reward of it all.  
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,  
The best and the last!  
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,  
And bade me creep past.  
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,  
The heroes of old,  
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears  
Of pain, darkness, and cold.  
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,  
The black minute's at end,  
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,  
Shall dwindle, shall blend,  
Shall change, shall become a peace out of pain,  
Then a light, then thy breast,  
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,  
And with God be at rest!

Can anyone after hearing that poem maintain that Browning was incapable, when he wished, of dispensing with eccentricities?

In conclusion, I should like to say that the subject I have been treating has nothing to do with the obscurity of Browning's poetry. His obscurity has nothing to do with his realism.

## SYNGE

*Incomplete notes of an Address to a Study Club*

Three years ago, in July 1910, died John Millington Synge, Irish dramatist, whose name will probably be better known twenty years hence, perhaps one hundred and twenty years hence, than it is to-day.

Those who know Ireland only by hearsay, or from books, or even from the stage, will be slow at first to appreciate his work; but we who know and love the real Ireland, we, who have wandered through her glens and by her streams, and looked upon her wonderful skies, who have felt within ourselves her sadness, her mirth, and her poetry, must at once acknowledge that in the work of Synge the soul of Ireland has, for the first time, received adequate expression. In that small island, a green speck in the tumbling billows of the Atlantic, right in the heart of the barren conventionalism of modern civilization, there still remains, if one knows where to look for it, the Celtic spirit in all its original purity; there is still to be found a glamour and a mystery as fine as any that lingers on the shores of old Romance.

Many have found and felt these things, but they have been silent, for they have been restrained from speech by a sense that such things could not be interpreted in words. Synge was the first to find the medium by which they might be expressed. "He was a solitary, undemonstrative man," says his friend Yeats, "never asking pity, nor complaining, nor seeking sympathy; all folded up in brooding intellect, knowing nothing of new books and newspapers, reading the great masters alone; and he was but the more hated because he gave his country what it needed, an unmoved mind, where there is a perpetual last day, a trumpeting and coming up to judgment."

Thus, it seems to me, Synge will be slow in winning recognition from the masses of his countrymen. He saw them too clearly, and painted too accurate a portrait of them to be flattering; they recognize their weaknesses and are indignant, while they fail to see that he has painted also their fine poetical qualities, their romance, and their tenderness.

Again the same writer: "In Ireland, he loved only what was wild in its people and in the grey wintry sides of many glens." All the rest, all that one reasoned over, fought for, read of in leading articles, all that came from Education, all that came down from young Ireland—aroused in him little interest. Perhaps its only effect on him was to awaken in him first that irony which, once awakened, he turned upon the whole of life.

The scene of Synge's later literary work—the work which counts—was the Abbey Theatre, a small and unpretentious building, hidden away in a side street near the Dublin quays. Here is a central point for the Irish Dramatic Movement, a movement recognized by all competent critics as being one of the most significant things in modern literature. Lovers of literature of the present generation who have been walking in a vain shadow, groping their way uneasily amid realistic novels, paradoxical problem plays, pale poems, and epigrammatic essays, turn with relief to a literature which is realistic, and at the same time rich and poetical, and which shows unmistakable signs of real vitality.

At the Abbey Theatre one may see the peasant life of modern Ireland and hear the beautiful legends of her past portrayed by native actors, with a fidelity and a force which have never been surpassed on any stage. Their acting is a true "holding of the mirror up to Nature"—there are no stage tricks, no declamations, no poses, no sound and fury—the scene is perhaps the rude interior of a peasant cottage in some Irish village, or of a hut in some lonely glen, or the side of a windy hill or open field, where the sun shines and the air is mild and the breeze fresh and kindly. The figures that fill the scene bear no resemblance to the traditional buffoon, who, on most stages, is made to do duty for an Irishman; their speech is quite unlike the traditional brogue which is commonly supposed to be the medium of communication between Irish peasants; the characters represented are primitive but poetical, wild but noble; their dialogue is rich with humour and imagination, and is spoken with a charming and musical intonation. In the movements and words of the people we see on the stage, there is no appearance of acting; they talk easily and naturally, their gestures are few and altogether free from exaggeration or striving after effect. Their whole performance is simple and apparently without effort; and yet I have again and again been far more profoundly stirred by this unpretentious acting, I have had a far deeper sense of the tragedy and comedy and mystery of life in this little Abbey Theatre than I have ever received from the elaborate productions of the London stage.

The Irish National Theatre was founded in 1899 by W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, who, ever since its inception, have devoted their time and thought and work almost exclusively to perfecting this new drama. The result has amply justified their faithful labour. The Irish National Theatre has already given to the world an entirely original style of acting, a company of actors "unrivalled in the quality which they profess," and now known not only in Ireland, but all



over Britain and America, and also several dramatists of extraordinary merit.

Of these dramatists Synge is undoubtedly the most remarkable. His production is small and extends over only a few years, but it is of a quality unknown in English literature since Elizabethan times. "It has been claimed for him," says Mr. Bickley, "that he is the greatest imaginative dramatist who has written English since Shakespeare, or at least since the Puritans closed the theatres in 1642." This claim may at first sight seem extravagant, especially to those who know the very limited range and quantity of Synge's work, but on reflection it is clear that if one admits that Synge is a great dramatist, one is forced also to admit that he is the first since Shakespeare. What have we had in drama since Shakespeare? A number of classical or pseudo-Shakespearean verse plays, most of them extremely dreary, from Addison to Swinburne, the brilliant but tawdry comedy of intrigue of the Restoration, the later eighteenth-century society comedy of Goldsmith and Sheridan, and the modern drawing-room dramas of Shaw and Wilde—to none of which the term great can properly be applied.

A study of the causes of the decay of the drama would be a most interesting one, but the topic is too large and too difficult to be attempted in a short paper. Suffice it to say, that Synge appeared to believe that the modern drama suffered from two main defects. Either it lacked reality, or it lacked poetry. The drama which was imaginative and poetical was alien from real life, the drama which attempted a realistic picture of life was flat and joyless and anaemic.

According to this idea two main things were necessary to a re-creation of the drama. First, the type of life in which there still remained some vigour, colour, and poetry; where convention had not crushed out all elemental emotions and produced a barren artificial uniformity; secondly, an artistic language by which that life might be expressed. Synge found both these requisites among the Irish peasantry of Connemara and the Aran Islands. In Mr. Bickley's books we learn how W. B. Yeats found Synge. Synge was then twenty-six. "He had wandered among people whose life is as picturesque as that of the Middle Ages, playing his fiddle to Italian sailors and listening to stories in Bavarian woods, but life had cast no light into his writings."

Following Yeats' advice, Synge left France and went to live at Aran, a group of stony islands at the entrance of Galway Bay. "There he lived the peasants' life, learned their language and discovered his own possibilities." In the Aran peasants he found a people with "an imagination, fiery and magnificent and tender," and at the same time with the elemental emotions strongly in evidence, a just mixture of God and brute. Synge found splendid material for a drama at once human and beautiful; in their language, English spoken by men who thought in Gaelic, that is, English coloured by Celtic imagination, he found his medium of expression. The result was the half-dozen plays which will probably survive most of the other writing of this generation.

To find the Ireland of romance, Synge returned again and again to Aran, to Kerry and to the Blaskets. "He was a drifting, silent man, full of hidden passion, and loved wild islands, because there, set out in the light of day, he saw what lay hidden in himself." He liked to enter the houses of the people and sit quietly listening to their talk. In the dialect of Aran "the cadence is long and meditative as befits the thought of men who are much alone, and who, when they meet in each other's houses—as is their way at the day's end—listen patiently, each man speaking in turn for some little time, and taking pleasure in the vaguer meaning of the words and in their sounds. Their thought, when not merely practical, is as full of traditional wisdom and extravagant pictures as some Aeschylean chorus."

Synge wrote down words and phrases wherever he went, and found the Irish dialect so rich a thing that he had begun translating into it fragments of the great literatures of the world and had planned a complete version of the *Imitation of Christ*. He attached great importance to the discovery of this dramatic dialect.

In Synge's plays is not to be found any definite philosophy; he was that rarest of things—a pure artist. "He loves all that has edge, all that is salt in the mouth, all that is rough to the hand, all that heightens the emotions by contrast, all that stings into life the sense of tragedy."

All his plays, except the beautiful *Deirdre*, in which he goes back to Irish legend for his plot, deal with modern peasant life in Ireland, and range from the rollicking comedy of the *Tinker's Wedding*, through the irony of the *Playboy of the Western World*, and the *Shadow of the Glen*, to the pure and magnificent tragedy of *Riders to the Sea*. I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the latter play when I saw it acted for the first time in the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, acted as only the Irish players can act it. I have seen it often since, and never without being deeply stirred, but

that first performance was a revelation and opened up a new world of thought and feeling.

*Riders to the Sea* is a short, simple, one-act play, taking, perhaps, twenty minutes to act; but in that twenty minutes the spectator plunges deep into the mystery and tragedy of life, before him black and bottomless depths of suffering; he becomes aware of Destiny hovering, a grim unseen presence, over the little lives of men. The background of the little play is the vast remorseless sea, and over it broods Eternity.

## DICKENS AND THACKERAY

*An Essay found among Professor Bateman's early papers*

To attempt anything like an adequate discussion of two literary giants like Dickens and Thackeray in a short paper of this kind is like undertaking to empty Niagara with a quart pot. It is obvious that I can hope to do no more than indicate in a rather sketchy way some of the main points of difference and resemblance in our two authors. In doing so I shall naturally pay somewhat more attention to Dickens than to Thackeray. With the exception of *Esmond*, Thackeray's work is all very much of the same kind, and displays a considerably smaller degree of variety and versatility than that of Dickens. One requires less guidance for an intelligent appreciation of Thackeray than for an intelligent appreciation of Dickens. The merits of Thackeray's work are easily seen and easily defined; a recognition of them is largely a matter of reason, and can confidently be expected from any intelligent reader. But Dickens is an author much more difficult to understand. His faults as well as his merits are gigantic; but then he frequently gets credit for faults which are not there, and sometimes even some of his greatest merits are construed as faults. The true appreciation of Dickens requires a larger exercise of the imagination than in the case of Thackeray. In other words, it is more a matter of feeling than of reason. Ask many a lover of Dickens to give a reason for the faith that is in him, and he may find it difficult to satisfy you.

Take, for example, Dickens's humorous characters. There are some who cannot be got to admit that Mr. Toots, Sim Tappertit, Sairey Gamp, and others of that ilk are divinely humorous and inspired creations; some will only admit that at best they are but "excellent fooling"; others will even characterize them as mere buffoonery. It is an inferior class of mind, however, which rejects the abnormal merely on account of its abnormality, and votes the improbable impossible, because it fails to fit in with previously conceived ideas of right and wrong. Criticism is useless in the case of people who hold such a view. I may assert, with all the force of which I am capable, that Mr. Toots is the best thing in *Dombey*; that age cannot wither Sairey Gamp any more than Cleopatra, and that she will blossom in perennial freshness while the language endures; but if you ask me for a reason, I can give none. It is no more possible to give a reason for liking Sairey Gamp than for disliking Dr. Fell. We can enjoy with Thackeray the skilful dissection of a character like that of Becky Sharp, and penetrate with him the innermost recesses of her mighty little soul; but Dickens himself could not have penetrated the secret of the composition of Sairey Gamp. In her presence criticism is dumb. We must be content to stand in humble and reverent admiration and satisfy ourselves with exclaiming, "Behold, it is very good." I shall return again to this point of characterization, but I must now say something of the position held by Dickens and Thackeray in the historical development of the novel.

Though undoubtedly the two greatest novelists of the Early Victorian school, Dickens and Thackeray are alike in exercising very little apparent influence on the development of the contemporary novel of manners. They both look back rather than forward. They set the crown and consummation on the work of the early eighteenth-century group of writers. Dickens derives from Smollett, and Thackeray from Fielding. When Dickens as a boy discovered in an old garret that precious pile of dusty eighteenth-century books, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Humphrey Clinker* and the rest, which he absorbed with such loving eagerness, he little thought that he was destined to be a second and a greater Smollett.

The characteristic type of English novel was defined by Richardson, Fielding, and their school at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It aimed at a dramatic representation of contemporary life and manners; it took, in fact, the place

of the drama as the popular form of literature. With the decay of the Fielding novel came a reaction, and opposed to the lusty and vivid realism of *Tom Jones* and *Humphrey Clinker* we get the sham mediaevalism, the dungeon-keeps, the echoing chambers, the hollow-voiced spectres, and the absurd sentiment of Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, and its imitators. This was a sort of side stream in the history of the novel, which nevertheless created the taste for historical romance, fed later by the novels of Scott. Scott stands apart from the main stream of English fiction, though his style exercised an immense influence on later novelists. After the mediaeval relapse, the contemporary novel of manners was continued at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century by Fanny Burney and Jane Austen. The latter died in 1817; between 1814 and 1832 Scott's novels fill the field of fiction; and then, between about 1835 and 1860, come Dickens and Thackeray with their contemporaries, of whom perhaps the most remarkable were Lytton and Disraeli. In none of these writers, however, must we look for the foundation of the characteristic Victorian novel—the novel of George Eliot and George Meredith. The founder of that novel was Charlotte Brontë. Her *Jane Eyre* and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* were published in the same year, 1848, and were reviewed together in a famous number of the *Quarterly*. The two works represent two distinct schools of fiction. Between the Dickens-Thackeray novel and the Brontë-Eliot novel there is a great gulf fixed. Dickens and Thackeray stand out from their time like two solitary giants.

Perhaps now it might be well to remind you briefly of the main facts in the literary history of the two men. Dickens's first great work, *Pickwick*, appeared in 1837, five years after the death of Scott. It was at once received with acclamation. His next book, *Oliver Twist*, though it must have come as a sort of shock after *Pickwick*, did not stem the tide of appreciation. Like Oliver himself, every one was soon asking for more. They did not ask in vain. During the next two decades, the forties and fifties, Dickens poured forth novel after novel with surprising rapidity. *Pickwick*, Sam Weller, Fagin, Squeers, Micawber soon became household words. Dickens won a popularity of which we can form no true conception. There has been nothing like it in our time. England and America were taken by storm; even France was infected with the prevailing enthusiasm.

During the days of Dickens' early popularity a clever young man had been making a name for himself as a humorist and satirist in the pages of *Fraser's Magazine*, *Punch*, and similar journals. This was William Makepeace Thackeray. In 1838, the year after *Pickwick*, Thackeray began a series known as the *Yellow Plush Papers*; during the next ten years he produced a great variety of journalistic work, short stories, sketches and essays, and wrote, in addition, two satirical novels, *Catherine* and *Barry Lyndon*. In 1848 he burst on the world as a great novelist with *Vanity Fair*, and within ten years more he had published *Pendennis*, *Esmond*, *The Newcomes*, and *The Virginians*. This brings us up to 1859. By that year Dickens had produced his best work; Thackeray had only four more years to live; and he was followed to the grave by Dickens in 1870. From this account it is apparent that Dickens made a much bigger stir than Thackeray in the contemporary literary world. He was the leviathan who frolicked at will in the sea of popular appreciation. Thackeray was a much smaller fish.

Considering Dickens and Thackeray first strictly as novelists, we find a point of resemblance in the fact that, from the point of view of form, they are both uncommonly bad novelists. A good novel, like any other work of art, must have some unity about it. The incidents must not be bundled in pell-mell, but must all contribute to the working out of some central idea or situation. Then we must have an element of romance, and this ought to regulate the subordination of the characters. The characters in every romance are essentially three, as Chesterton puts it, St. George, the Princess, and the Dragon; that is, St. George, something that loves and fights; the Princess, something that is loved and fought for; while the Dragon represents the opposition. Other characters besides these three there may and must be, but they serve as mere machinery or scenery as far as the romance is concerned.

Now let us consider the novels of Dickens and Thackeray from these points of view. As regards incident they are almost wholly lacking in unity. We cannot exactly deny them plots. They develop stories and interesting stories, but it is not an orderly development. Dickens strings his incidents together almost haphazard, and so, to a large extent, does Thackeray. (By the way, in these remarks on Thackeray I do not include *Esmond*, which is magnificent, but is not really Thackeray.)

In the greater part of his writing Dickens had no central aim or motive in view; he wrote, so to speak, from hand to mouth. Most of his books in fact were written for periodicals in monthly parts, and it is safe to say that nobody, and least of all Dickens himself, knew exactly what a month would bring forth. I am here again speaking generally; there are some exceptions, notably the *Tale of Two Cities*—which stands almost as much apart from the rest of Dickens's work as *Esmond* does from the rest of Thackeray's—and the unfinished *Edwin Drood*. Of Thackeray we may say that he may

have had some central aim or motive in his novels, but if so, he paid little attention to it, and did not allow it to impede his rambling progress in the smallest degree. We may take it, then, as generally true that the novels of Dickens and Thackeray are rough-hewn and sometimes shapeless. In the case of Dickens this characteristic seldom annoys, but it is otherwise with Thackeray. I doubt, for example, if there is anyone here who has read and enjoyed every word of that fearfully digressive and dropsical novel, *The Newcomes*.

Again, as regards characters, in neither novelist do we get an orderly subordination. Dickens, perhaps, is the worst offender in this respect. In Thackeray, the hero and heroine are usually in a sense the most important personages, though crowds of personages who have really nothing to do with the story bulk very largely, and though in *Vanity Fair* there is no hero at all. But in Dickens, the personages who ought to be most important have frequently very little to do with the novel. As a rule, the leading characters, hero, heroine, and villain, are lifeless and uninteresting, and only serve to connect loosely a great amount of strictly secondary matter.

The really important characters in Dickens are the *unimportant* ones, those who are introduced *en passant*, and who might as well be anywhere else as far as the story is concerned. In *Nicholas Nickleby* Nicholas himself does not interest me, neither does his sister, neither do Madeline Bray and Mr. Bray, neither does Ralph Nickleby. The people who do interest me are people like Mrs. Nickleby, Mantalini, the Squeers family, the Kenwigs, and Vincent Crummies. In *Martin Chuzzlewit* the least important character is Martin himself, but his life serves as a string upon which are hung Pecksniff, Todger's Boarding House and all that therein was, Chevy Slime, Esq., Sairey Gamp, Betsy Prigg, Mr. Mould, Elijah Pogram, and many others in whose company there is endless delight. All these, however, might just as well have been hung on the string of *Nicholas Nickleby* or *David Copperfield* or *Bleak House* or almost any of the other books. Similarly all through. In *Dombey* Florence is a nonentity, Walter Gay is a nonentity, Dombey himself is a "made character," well-made, but not created. In *David Copperfield* David begins by being a reality, but tails off into an abstraction. In *A Tale of Two Cities* Darnay does not exist, and Lucie Manette only barely exists. In both Dickens and Thackeray, in fact, the romantic element is really subordinate, in Dickens very much so; and in neither writer do St. George, the Princess, and the Dragon ever become all-important. Both writers, in fact, are to be judged piece-meal, as creators of situations and characters, rather than in the bulk as creators of novels.

The keynote of the work of both our authors was struck in two of their first works of any note. In 1848 Thackeray published in *Punch* the series of papers entitled the *Book of Snobs*, which marks his dedication to the especial task of unmasking the pretence and sham which underlay the whole of English public and private life. His definition of the word *snob* was comprehensive. "The snob," says Thackeray, "is a child of aristocratical societies. Perched on his step of the long social ladder, he respects the man on the step above and despises the man on the step below, without enquiring what they are worth, solely on account of their position; in his innermost heart he finds it natural to kiss the boots of the first, and to kick the second." Starting with this definition, Thackeray lashed unsparingly all classes of society from the highest to the lowest. He discovered and unmasked snobs of all descriptions, church snobs, military snobs, literary snobs, country snobs, political snobs, Continental snobs. In this book Thackeray appears as the caustic satirist of every sort of social hypocrisy, and this character he maintains in his novels. *Pendennis*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The Newcomes* are largely *Books of Snobs* worked into the form of novels.

Dickens's first important work was his *Sketches by Boz*, a series of papers in which he describes various aspects and phases of the life of the English lower middle class. Though somewhat crude in style and occasionally even vulgar in tone, these papers are seldom completely commonplace, and many of the characteristics of the mature Dickens can be discerned there in embryo. They have a distinction of manner and a suggestion of creative power which is unmistakable, and they mark the dedication of Dickens to his especial task, the sympathetic though exaggerated painting of the poorer middle classes. While Thackeray took his stand on the universal sham and corruption of our social system, lashing hypocrisy and showing up the rottenness which lay hidden beneath the whited sepulchres of society, Dickens revealed the treasures which were buried beneath the rubbish-heap designated as the "poorer middle classes." Just as Thackeray's novels are glorified *Books of Snobs*, so Dickens's novels are, for the most part, glorified *Sketches by Boz*. His early works, though called novels, are undisguisedly a series of sketches loosely strung together. *Pickwick*, of course, is absolutely episodic. It was begun to supply the letterpress to a series of drawings by a popular artist, and when Dickens commenced he had no aim except to get his characters into such amusing situations as would afford scope to the illustrator. As the book goes on, however, it begins to get hold of Dickens, and the change is seen especially in the character of Pickwick, who begins as an elderly crank about whom Dickens does not care a jot, but develops into one of the most lovable old gentlemen of fiction. However, the fact remains that *Pickwick* has not the remotest vestige of a plot,

and can by no stretch of the imagination be called a novel. Again, *Oliver Twist*, as Chesterton remarks, is really not a novel, and might, without losing much, have been published as a series of papers entitled *The Workhouse*, *A Thieves' Den*, and so on. *Nicholas Nickleby* might similarly have been published as a series of papers entitled *A Yorkshire School*, *A Provincial Theatre*, and so on. The fact that all these sketches are strung together on the lives of those shadowy personages Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby does not at all affect their real character. After *Nicholas Nickleby* the books begin to lose, to some extent, this sketchiness, that is, the episodes are more closely and skilfully interwoven into a connected whole, but still Dickens, the novelist, never quite emerges from Boz, the essayist.

These remarks about Dickens naturally lead me to say something about the development of our two authors. About Thackeray I cannot say very much. By the time he emerges from the undercurrent of journalistic work, all the essentials of the mature Thackeray seem almost fully developed. *Barry Lyndon* is almost as mature in style as *Vanity Fair*. *Vanity Fair* itself, Thackeray's first work of importance, is also his greatest work. That is, instead of working up to a climax as a novelist, Thackeray began at the top and worked downwards. Of course, we must remember that when he wrote it he had reached the age of thirty-seven. The subsequent novels, with the exception of *Esmond*, mark a deterioration, and not an advance.

I must here make a slight digression to speak of *Esmond*. Into this brilliant historical patch Thackeray threw all his great knowledge of, and love for, the eighteenth century. He was soaked in eighteenth-century literature and history—witness his *Four Georges* and *English Humourists*; and in *Esmond* he assumed with consummate skill the eighteenth-century manner.

In this novel Thackeray casts off completely his mask of cynicism, and appears as a man of noble feeling and deep sympathy, who could write a polished, pure, and straightforward English style. We feel, however, that the book is after all only a brilliant freak, and that the real Thackeray is the cynical, the satirical, and the caustic Thackeray of *Vanity Fair*. *Esmond* stands to the rest of Thackeray's work somewhat in the relation of *Romola* to George Eliot's other novels. In both the atmosphere is artificial, the result of long and careful study, and in both the deception is so perfect that the artificiality is almost impossible to detect. In two of his novels Dickens took historical subjects, namely in *Barnaby Rudge* and the *Tale of Two Cities*. The latter is the acme of Dickens's attainments in the descriptive style, and is perhaps more restrained and artistic than any of his other works. In brilliant imagination and vivid representation of an historical phase he more than equals Thackeray, though his novel falls short of *Esmond* in characterization. *Esmond*, *Beatrix*, and *Lady Castlewood* are much better than *Darnay*, *Lucie*, and the *Doctor*, though *Sidney Carton*, perhaps, is as fine as anything in Thackeray.

To return to the question of development, we may say that Thackeray's style was fully developed during his career as a journalist, essayist, and writer of short stories, and that we find its culminating point in *Vanity Fair*.

In the case of Dickens, however, we can trace a well-marked, if rapid, advance. *Sketches by Boz* are distinctly crude. *Pickwick Papers* are a startling advance on one side of Dickens's art. We find in them the vigour, versatility, and exuberance of a youthful and tremendous imagination. They display inexhaustible resource and gigantic humour. Dickens lavished enough genius on them to do ten ordinary men for a lifetime, and yet he did it with perfect ease. We feel that he enjoyed himself in writing them, that he revelled in the task. Every character, down to the smallest, lives. Mr. John Swanker and Mr. Cyrus Bantam, for example, are as real to us as Mr. Sam Weller and Mr. Pickwick. Pickwick is one of the greatest of humorous portraits in literature. It is as great as the *Canterbury Tales*. It is wonderful that a young writer who in *Sketches by Boz* had only been feeling his way should, at one bound, reach the height of excellence which we find in *Pickwick*. The incidents are commonplace enough. The jokes are the sort of jokes which are still the stock-in-trade of the ha'penny comic—jokes about mothers-in-law, red-nosed curates, and falling on the ice, about getting drunk, and fighting, and fatness, and sitting upon one's hat. But what a difference between the treatment of Dickens and that of the uninspired humorists.

*Pickwick*, however, as I have said, represents only one side of Dickens's art, but perhaps the greatest side, the humorous delineation of character. There is as yet no trace of Dickens the novelist (for by no stretch of the imagination can *Pickwick* be called a novel), of Dickens the master of pathos, of Dickens the descriptive artist. There is, however, to be found in *Pickwick* traces of a youthful phase in Dickens's character, a somewhat morbid leaning towards the horrible and criminal, afterwards toned down and corrected by his strong common sense, but never wholly absent. This trait is to be found in some of the short stories inserted in *Pickwick*, notably *The Madman's Tale*. The latter story might have

served as a warning to some very discerning critic of the startling change to be found in Dickens's next book, *Oliver Twist*. In this work the lavish humour of *Pickwick* dwindles down to very small proportions, and is decidedly outweighed by the horrible and morbid. The murder of Nancy and the death of Bill Sykes are only equalled for vivid awfulness a couple of times in Dickens's later books, notably in *Bleak House* and in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. In *Oliver Twist* appears a new element which was to take a prominent place in Dickens's future work, the element of social reform. Social reform had already produced the workhouse. Dickens started his reform by attacking the workhouse. But Dickens is not yet a novelist. The romantic element is absent in *Oliver Twist*; the hero is only a child.

It was in his fourth book, *Nicholas Nickleby*, that we find Dickens definitely deciding to write romance. Accordingly he introduces an impossibly good St. George, throws in a Princess and a Dragon half-way through for his benefit, and tries to make an orthodox novel. He succeeds, however, in making only a very poor imitation of one. Nicholas himself is a hopelessly badly-drawn character; and in fact nearly everywhere in the story that Dickens tries to be definitely romantic and orthodox he sinks below the level of the ha'penny novelette.

In his next book, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840), he almost abandons his good intentions formed with *Nicholas Nickleby*, and we return to the realm of sketches and sketchiness. He is progressing, however, in the use of forcible and restrained language. *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) is splendid of its kind, the best bit of actual writing Dickens had yet done, though it is rather a series of brilliant pictures than an orthodox novel. The hero is an idiot, but nevertheless not so idiotic as was Nicholas Nickleby. In *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844) we get an attempt at romance. Martin is a hero a little more life-like than the much-abused Nicholas. In this book Dickens's powers of satire come out at their best in his pictures of American society, and his power of humorous characterization is also at its height in Pecksniff, Sairey Gamp, and many of the minor characters. The melodramatic side of Dickens's art unfortunately comes out unpleasantly strong in the description of old Chuzzlewit and his hopeful son, Jonas. At this point all Dickens's characteristic traits may be said to be fully developed. From this time, except in *David Copperfield*, which marks the culmination of his powers, and in the *Tale of Two Cities*, there is a distinct decline. *Dombey* is in parts magnificent, but a sort of gloom hangs over most of the book, relieved only by such bright patches as Mr. Toots, Bunsby, and Susan Nipper. Major Bagstock is the most unpleasant of Dickens's humorous characters. In this novel Dickens trespassed on Thackeray's preserves with disastrous results. His attempted satire on fashionable society and fashionable marriages, in the Cleopatra-Edith-Carker episodes, should be compared with Thackeray's treatment of a similar subject in *The Newcomes*. Still, there is nothing crude about the style of *Dombey*; it has the strength and force of maturity. After *David Copperfield*, which is known and loved by every one, and which is the most purely natural and wholly lovable of Dickens's books, we get a series of what may be called splendid failures in *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, *Hard Times*, *Our Mutual Friend*, and *Great Expectations*. They all contain magnificent patches, but they fail to impress one like the earlier books. It is some time now since I read *Bleak House*, and I must say I have very faint recollections of the greater part of it, whereas the earlier works are unforgettable.

Proceeding now to a consideration of Dickens and Thackeray as humorists, we may say, in a general way, that Thackeray's humour is largely incidental to his style, whereas the humour is the very root and groundwork of Dickens's best and most characteristic writing. It is difficult to define humour, but it seems to me that it consists, to a considerable extent, in an unexpected overthrow of the strictly logical. Mr. Micawber, the weak and foolish, the obvious failure in life, logically ought to be the most despairing and miserable of men. The fact, however, that so far from harbouring self-contempt, Mr. Micawber has a self-confidence which nothing can destroy, and that so far from retiring with disgust from a world which offers him nothing but kicks, he has the most childlike faith in his ultimate acquirement of unlimited halfpence, strikes us as being such a curious and blessed reversal of the logical order of things that we are pleased with Mr. Micawber. Instead of despising him, we love him. Micawber is undoubtedly a fool. Nearly all Dickens's great characters are fools. They are persons whom we should avoid in real life; but the gospel of Dickens, as Chesterton says, "is to suffer fools gladly." "Every instant we neglect a great fool merely because he is foolish. Every day we neglect Tootses and Swivellers, Guppys and Joblings. Every day we are missing a monster whom we might love, and an imbecile whom we should certainly admire." The humour of Dickens took the failures of life and turned them into successes. True humour is seldom far separated from pathos, and with Dickens, even while we laugh, we pity and we love. With Thackeray we laugh, but as a rule we do not love nor pity, we despise. The element of pathos is in general absent from Thackeray's humour; hence it is not really true humour at all; it is an inverted way of looking at things which strikes us as being funny. But the critic is always with Thackeray, hidden beneath the humorist. It is impossible for him to produce a lovable fool, for it is impossible for him to conceal the fact that he knows his character is a fool, and despises

him accordingly. Take Jos. Sedley in *Vanity Fair*. The big Anglo-Indian was just the stuff of which a good Dickens's character is made. He is just the right sort of fool. But Thackeray goes out of his way to make him as contemptible as he is laughable, and in the end we are extremely glad to be rid of Mr. Jos.

In other words, with Thackeray the humour is nearly always outweighed by the satire. Thackeray is always considered as a satirist *par excellence*. But Dickens also is a satirist of another and perhaps a more effective kind. Thackeray's satire is the keen, cold, pitiless dissection of a surgeon. He lays bare every motive, every contemptible little spring of action. He tries, indeed, by his humorous manner to convince us that he is not all the time desperately in earnest, but behind it all we feel the preacher warning us, holding up examples for us, imploring us not to be or do likewise. In the character of Mr. Osborne, for example, we have the city magnate, self-made and able, but the slave of money. He is under the impression that money can make up for the vulgarity and coarseness of which he is vaguely conscious. When poor Sedley, his old friend, is broken, he casts him off without pity; along with Sedley's money, all his value in Osborne's eyes had disappeared. The latter lavished his wealth in trying to make his son a gentleman, and the result is that miserable cad, George Osborne, who despises his father, disappoints his wishes out of obstinacy, marries Amelia out of bravado, tires of her and proceeds to flirt with Becky Sharp, and dies a hero's death at Waterloo because he cannot help himself. Thackeray shows it all up without mercy, and he is always showing up similar things in great profusion. His satire depends largely for its effect on his *manner*. He conceals from us his indignation and contempt for the vices he describes, and writes of them carelessly, almost flippantly, as if they were the most natural things in the world. This is another effect gained by the reversal of the logical. But is such satire effective? I doubt it. I doubt that all Thackeray's analysis of the vice and rottenness of fashionable society ever turned one sinner from the evil of his ways. People do not mind being shown up, although they hate to be made ridiculous. Now Dickens's method of satirizing was to make the objects which he attacked ridiculous. He took the weak points of a man or an institution, carried them to extremes and showed their logical absurdity. When people saw in the person of Bumble what workhouse beadle were—not bad, not vicious—but absurd institutions, they desired to get rid of them. Dickens might have abused Yorkshire schools till he was blue in the face, have analysed and shown up their weak points, and written to the papers, and yet might have done little good. Instead, he drew Squeers, and while people laughed consumedly, they also made a mental note that such persons as Squeers were an absurd blot on our social system and should forthwith be abolished. When Dickens wished to satirize America, he did not make an exhaustive analysis of the American system. He simply accepted its absurdities, exaggerated them to the utmost limit, embodied them in Elijah Pogram, Jefferson Brick, and their fellows, and drew a crushing satirical picture of a state of society eaten up with self-conceit. When a man beholds his natural face in a distorting mirror, he is not quite so pleased with himself as before; and when the Americans beheld themselves in the mirror of *Martin Chuzzlewit* they were not pleased either. If Thackeray had taken on himself to analyse and expose their moral corruption, they would probably have felt flattered. Dickens's method of satire was the *reductio ad absurdum*, and appealed to the imagination. Further, Thackeray's satire was generally aimed at individuals and had for its object moral reform. We must admit, however, in favour of Thackeray's method that it produced brilliant, consistent, and life-like pictures of society such as Dickens was wholly incapable of drawing. If you want real life, go to Thackeray; but if you wish to get out of this world for a while, and take a short holiday in another and a more pleasant world, go to Dickens. I hope no one will think that I am here belittling the genius of Thackeray. *Vanity Fair* will ever stand as one of the most brilliant works of fiction in the language. It is more consistently good than anything Dickens ever did. As a humorous and, at the same time, dreadfully caustic picture of society it is incomparable. In breadth of view and variety of incident it rivals *Tom Jones*; in minute observation of detail it reminds one of Jane Austen.

It is as a creator of character that, in my opinion, Dickens has his greatest advantage over Thackeray. The man who maintains that Dickens is a genius of the first order must be finally driven to take his stand on Dickens's characters. Thackeray's characters are photographic; they are excellent copies of life. Yet, admirable as many of them are, we can never quite get away from the suspicion that they were made for a purpose. Thackeray takes them to pieces with such skill that we are half inclined to think that he also puts them together. But Dickens's characters are pure creatures of the imagination. They are not studies of, but splendid additions to, the human race. Dickens does not analyse their motives, and could not if he would. He describes them, and we feel that they are alive. The very smallest of them is indelibly impressed on our imagination. Dickens conquered Thackeray completely in his minor characters. I have read *The Newcomes* recently, for example, but I have no clear idea of the distinction between Mrs. Brian Newcome and Mrs. Hobson Newcome; I have read *Chuzzlewit* less recently, but I am quite clear about Mr. Chevy Slime and Mr. Tigg.

Thackeray produced a tremendous variety of characters, but the large majority of them, I should say, are unpleasant.

Thackeray, when all is said and done, was first and last a moralist; and it was his aim as a moralist to make his characters unpleasant. There are few lovable characters in *Pendennis*; there are none in *Vanity Fair*. The few respectable characters are all figure-heads, and as for the remainder, if it were not for the humour and dramatic force with which they are pictured to us, the description of such people as Becky Sharp, Sir Pitt Crawley, Lord Steyne, and Jos. Sedley could give little pleasure. As it is, one feels that outside the pages of Thackeray one would give a good deal to avoid meeting them. But who would not give his dearest possession for the privilege of beholding in the flesh Sam Weller, Mr. Micawber, Sairey Gamp, Mr. Dick, and even such unmitigated scoundrels as Jingle and Squeers. There are in Dickens many sorts of characters, but only one sort is great—the characters whom Dickens himself found amusing. The characters he admired, such as Nicholas, are wooden; the characters he hated are too hateful; but the characters, whether pleasant or unpleasant, in whom he found something amusing are all at least interesting. Those whom he found amusing and at the same time lovable are his greatest characters.

The persons in Dickens's pages whom I call his *great* characters are frequently accused of being impossible. You might as well say that a hippopotamus or a duck-billed platypus is impossible because it does not suit your ideas of what is right and proper. The existence of the hippopotamus is its justification, and it is so also with a Dickens character. It is obviously not copied, nor is it a mere abstraction. It is vividly alive. *You* could not have created it, and you know that nobody else but Dickens could. I think it quite possible that a very clever man might produce a Colonel Newcome, or a Blanche Amory, or even a Becky Sharp; but I assert that no one but Dickens could produce a Sairey Gamp or a Mr. Toots, and that nobody would be mad enough to try.

Dickens's characters are improbable, that I grant you. But any man with a marked individuality is improbable. It is all the people in the world to one against his being what he is. Dickens's characters are just a little more improbable, that is all. Dickens's work is called by Chesterton rather mythology than history or fiction, the mythology of the lower middle class. Micawber and Pecksniff, like Falstaff and Lear, Hector and Achilles, are immortal realities, an undying possession of humanity. Their alleged *impossibility* is, in fact, their passport to immortality. Thackeray's exact copies of life may grow faded and out of date; but Dickens's creations will never be any more impossible than when he created them. They will never be too impossible for our acceptance. The glories of a Toots and a Swiveller were veiled from the eyes of Thackeray. If he could have conceived such characters, he would have exposed their weaknesses (an easy task), and covered them with ridicule and contempt. But as depicted by the kindly hand of Dickens, who is not ready to own them as fellow creatures and admit that they are lovable?

The mention of Pecksniff reminds me that Dickens is sometimes accused of merely attaching a label to his characters, of making them living embodiments of some trait or peculiarity; in other words, that Dickens, like Ben Jonson, made his characters mere illustrations of some particular humour. Thus Mark Tapley may be designated by the word "jolly," Micawber will always be "hoping for something to turn up," Pecksniff will always be playing the hypocrite. But though Pecksniff is first and foremost a hypocrite, and though Dickens's purpose is undoubtedly to impress on us and exaggerate his hypocrisy, he has all the other essentials of a human being. He can, for example, get drunk. Let me read a few extracts from that marvellous scene from *Martin Chuzzlewit* when Mr. Pecksniff gets tipsy at Todgers' Boarding House. If any one, after reading it, can still assert that it is an abstraction or impossible, I give him up in despair.

The gentlemen, after the toasts have been drunk, rejoin the ladies:

Mr. Pecksniff had followed his younger friends up-stairs and taken a chair at the side of Mrs. Todgers. He had also spilt a cup of coffee over his legs without appearing to be aware of the circumstance; nor did he seem to know that there was muffin on his knee.

"And how have they used you down-stairs, sir?" asked the hostess.

"Their conduct has been such, my dear madam," said Mr. Pecksniff, "as I can never think of without emotion, or remember without a tear. Oh, Mrs. Todgers!"

"My goodness!" exclaimed the lady. "How low you are in your spirits, sir!"

"I am a man, my dear madam," said Mr. Pecksniff, shedding tears, and speaking with an imperfect articulation, "but I am also a father. I am also a widower. My feelings, Mrs. Todgers, will not consent to be entirely smothered, like the young children in the Tower. They are grown up, and the more I press the bolster on them, the more they look round the corner of it."



He suddenly became conscious of the bit of muffin, and stared at it intently: shaking his head the while, in a forlorn and imbecile manner, as if he regarded it as his evil genius, and mildly reproached it.

"She was beautiful, Mrs. Todgers," he said, turning his glazed eye again upon her, without the least preliminary notice. "She had a small property."

"So I have heard," said Mrs. Todgers with great sympathy.

"Those are her daughters," said Mr. Pecksniff, pointing out the young ladies, with increased emotion.

Mrs. Todgers had no doubt about it.

"Mercy and Charity," said Mr. Pecksniff, "Charity and Mercy. Not unholy names, I hope?"

"Mr. Pecksniff!" cried Mrs. Todgers. "What a ghastly smile! Are you ill, sir?"

He pressed his hand upon her arm, and answered in a solemn manner, and a faint voice, "Chronic."

"Chronic?" cried the frightened Mrs. Todgers.

"Chron-ic," he repeated with some difficulty. "Chronic. A chronic disorder. I have been its victim from childhood. It is carrying me to my grave."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Mrs. Todgers.

"Yes, it is," said Mr. Pecksniff, reckless with despair. "I am rather glad of it, upon the whole. You are like her, Mrs. Todgers."

"Don't squeeze me so tight, pray, Mr. Pecksniff. If any of the gentlemen should notice us."

"For her sake," said Mr. Pecksniff. "Permit me. In honour of her memory. For the sake of a voice from the tomb. You are *very* like her, Mrs. Todgers! What a world this is!"

"Ah! Indeed you may say that!" cried Mrs. Todgers.

"I am afraid it is a vain and thoughtless world," said Mr. Pecksniff, overflowing with despondency. "These young people about us. Oh! what sense have they of their responsibilities? None. Give me your other hand, Mrs. Todgers."

The lady hesitated, and said "she didn't like."

"Has a voice from the grave no influence?" said Mr. Pecksniff with dismal tenderness. "This is irreligious! My dear creature."

"Hush!" urged Mrs. Todgers. "Really you mustn't."

"It's not me," said Mr. Pecksniff. "Don't suppose it's me: it's the voice; it's her voice."

Mrs. Pecksniff, deceased, must have had an unusually thick and husky voice for a lady, and rather a stuttering voice, and to say the truth somewhat of a drunken voice, if it had ever borne much resemblance to that in which Mr. Pecksniff spoke just then. But perhaps this was delusion on his part.

"It has been a day of enjoyment, Mrs. Todgers, but still it has been a day of torture. It has reminded me of my loneliness. What am I in the world?"

"An excellent gentleman, Mr. Pecksniff," said Mrs. Todgers.

"There is consolation in that too," cried Mr. Pecksniff. "Am I?"

"There is no better man living," said Mrs. Todgers, "I am sure."

Mr. Pecksniff smiled through his tears, and slightly shook his head.... "Chronic—chronic! Let's have a little drop of something to drink."

"Bless my life, Miss Pecksniffs!" cried Mrs. Todgers, aloud, "your dear pa 's took very poorly!"

Mr. Pecksniff straightened himself by a surprising effort, as every one turned hastily towards him; and standing on his feet, regarded the assembly with a look of ineffable wisdom. Gradually it gave place to a smile; a feeble, helpless, melancholy smile; bland almost to sickness. "Do not repine, my friends," said Mr. Pecksniff, tenderly. "Do not weep for me. It is chronic." And with these words, after making a futile attempt to pull off his shoes, he fell into the fireplace.

In conclusion, I am sorry that I have not time to discuss the actual style of our two writers. I had hoped to dwell a little on Dickens's descriptive power, in which he far excels Thackeray; on that wonderful photographic imagination of his which impresses on our minds the scenery of his novels down to the smallest details as vividly as it was impressed on his own, on his splendid handling of crowds and big stage effects. I am afraid that in the foregoing remarks I have dwelt too much on Dickens's strong points; I have said nothing of his cheap melodrama, his maudlin pathos, his frequent bad taste; but after all, these are but comparatively small blots on a great genius, and they nearly always occur where Dickens is trying to impress us in a way that does not come naturally to him. I am afraid, also, that I have emphasized

mainly Thackeray's weak points and neglected his strong ones. I set off, however, avowedly as a champion of Dickens, and I should find it hard to pose as an impartial judge, for while I only admire Thackeray, I love Dickens.

## PESSIMISM

This poem and the poem entitled "Eternal Silence" were found among Professor Bateman's papers. While there is some doubt as to their authorship, there are indications that they are probably his workmanship.

### WHAT IS THE END TO WHICH ALL THINGS PROGRESS?

No man will ever know;  
Not though for countless years  
Not though with toil and tears  
Millions of human brains  
Ever more strong and clear,  
Rise on this planet here;  
And with more perfect skill,  
With cunning greater still  
Than any yet attains,  
Probe for the mystery.

Why all these burning suns  
Ringed with their planets  
Driving through endless space?  
By what strange accident  
Rose there to consciousness  
On this poor ball of earth  
A being aware,  
Who can wonder and question?  
A speck in the Universe,  
Who looks up aghast  
At the glittering riddle  
That night ever brings him?  
One speck that dissents  
From the law of the Whole,  
The one interruption  
To the balanced perfection,  
The voiceless and passionless life  
Of the meaningless Whole?

And when, in countless years,  
At last comes the moment  
When this little system,  
The sun and the moon and the stars that are seven,  
Shall crash to its doom  
'Gainst some on-coming sphere-world,  
And with infinite roaring  
And hideous combustion,  
Burst all into atoms  
And seething abysses  
Of nebulae, fiery and whirling,

Then, with it shall perish  
The last fading traces  
Of life and of love  
And of human endeavour  
That are left on this cold, lifeless earth-star;

And so shall go on  
For ever and ever  
Through infinite spaces,  
World making and breaking,  
And Man's little moment,  
His life on this planet,  
A drop in the ages,  
Shall pass unlamented,  
Shall pass unrecurrent,  
A strange inexplicable chance  
In the meaningless Whole.

## BRAINS AND INTELLECT

*A fugitive production—occasion unknown*

Accepting the well-known dictum of Appius Claudius that the government is the belly of the body-politic, and the general mob of citizens "the limbs and outward flourishes," what section of the community, shall we say, constitutes the brains? We might, at first, be inclined to assign the role of "brains" to those members of the community who are particularly occupied with the pursuit of learning, such as, for example (to take a large and representative class), University professors. A little reflection, however, suffices to show that we should be mistaken. The men who are usually spoken of as the "brains of the community" are of a very different type from University professors. They are men who maintain fair round bellies and expansive watch chains, who ride in automobiles and smoke imposing cigars. Clearly, University professors are not in this class.

Where, then, shall we place those members of the community who make the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake their chief occupation? It may help us towards the solution of this weighty problem if we make a distinction between brains and intellect, and call such people as professors, philosophers, and poets the "intellect" of the community. We shall then have to define clearly what we mean by "brains," and what we mean by "intellect."

"Brains" are what a man uses when he has some practical end in view, such as more money in his pocket, better food to eat, better clothes to wear; "intellect" deals with problems (usually classed as "academic") which have no immediate commercial value—such as whether the sun goes round the earth or the earth round the sun, or why an apple falls to the ground. "Brains" are generally admired, because everybody can see the results which they achieve; "intellect" is usually treated with neglect or indifference because it works in a sphere which is far out of range of the common vision.

What, then, is the justification for the maintenance in a community of a purely intellectual class of people, occupied with problems which have nothing to do with actual life, and which apparently contribute nothing to the common stock of "useful" knowledge, the kind of knowledge that can be turned into money. Why, for example, do we maintain at great expense in our universities professors of literature, philosophy, and pure science to devote their time to the study of merely academic problems, and to teach our sons and daughters such a smattering of these things as is of no practical use to them whatever, and which causes most of them a good deal of trouble and annoyance?

It is easy to understand why we should maintain professors of such subjects as engineering, dentistry, and agriculture, for engines and teeth are both things that will not allow themselves to be neglected, and it is undoubtedly a good thing to make two blades of grass grow where only one grew before. But why should a man be afraid to devote his time to making an appreciation of Greek tragedy grow where none grew before, or to try to arouse an interest in such a problem as the psychology of metre.

It may be argued, of course, that University professors provide a good deal of amusement for their students, that their personal peculiarities, carefully observed through four years of class-room work, often furnish rich entertainment at convivial gatherings. Or, again, it may be urged that the study of professors (in so far as professors can be regarded as human) is the study of human nature, and that students who observe their professors carefully are gaining an acquaintance with a practical branch of the science of anthropology. But neither of these answers to our question can be regarded as wholly satisfactory.

Let us consider briefly the function of intellect in the individual, and see if it will throw any light on the function of the intellectual class in the community. When intellect is developed at all in the average citizen, its sole function seems to be to make him either uncomfortable or objectionable. For suppose a small puny growth of intellect does appear in a man, it generally has one of two effects; either it makes him *dissatisfied* with himself, troubled with vague yearnings after a higher life, worried with misgivings on religious questions, annoyed by the feeling that he ought to be able to enjoy books and pictures and music which afford him no real enjoyment; or, he becomes abnormally *satisfied* with himself, propounds half-baked theories of the universe, teems with criticisms of books which he has not read or does not understand, or bubbles over with solutions of problems upon which he has never seriously pondered.

The one thing that such men can seldom be got to do is to set to work to develop that little growth of intellect, to feed and nourish it by the study of literature and philosophy, so that they may at last be enabled to think out problems for themselves, or at least to appreciate intelligently the solutions of them which great thinkers have placed on record. When, oh when, will men understand that intellectual things are not an amusement nor a hobby, to be taken up as a side-line in one's spare time, but that the appreciation of the things of the intellect is the reward of the most difficult and baffling of all kinds of labour; that one will appreciate Plato or Sophocles, Shakespeare or Milton, Descartes or Newton, precisely in proportion to the distance which one has climbed along the rugged path which leads to the intellectual peaks upon which those giants of thought sit eternally throned, that the cultivation of the intellect is not the work of four years or forty years, but of a lifetime, nay, of many lifetimes?

To spend uncounted years of pain,  
Again, again, and yet again,  
In working out in heart and brain,  
The problem of our being here,  
To gather facts from far and near,  
Upon the mind to hold them clear  
And knowing more may yet appear,  
Unto one's latest breath to fear,  
The premature result to draw—  
Is the object, end and law,  
And purpose of our being here?

asks Clough, and to this question all our greatest thinkers have answered—Yes.

It is the few who are convinced of the value and seriousness of intellectual things, and who do not flinch from the self-sacrifice and apparently fruitless labour which the pursuit of such things involves, that humanity as a whole owes its progress. If it were not for these men, whom Bunyan would call the intellectual Greathearts of the community, we should still, as a race, be sunk in barbarism. Intellect in the average man is allowed to atrophy; in the small percentage who strive after culture it accomplishes nothing of value, but it is the latter people who form the rank and file of the intellectual army. Gradually, little by little, that army is advancing; every now and then some great general appears—a Plato, a Shakespeare, a Newton, a Kant, a Darwin—and under his leadership a victory is won; now this outpost of the hosts of darkness is captured, now that, and the flag of the human intellect is raised upon its ramparts. Meanwhile, the mass of mankind trudges on heavily, often two or three centuries behind. Next arrive the inventors, the reformers, the

men of constructive intellect, who take the results of the great thinkers and plan their application to life; and lastly come the men of "brains" in their fur coats and fair round bellies, promote their companies, organize their industries, make their political speeches, and finally gather in the shekels, and also most of the honour and glory. By this time the intellectual army is again far ahead, attacking the next outpost of the kingdom of chaos and Old Night. And so humanity moves onward and upward.

What, then, is the function of the academic class in the community? Simply to keep the flag of human intellect flying, a work which, in most cases, involves some self-sacrifice in those who devote themselves to it. A professor, for example, though a man of intellect, is not necessarily devoid of brains, and he might well turn those brains to advantage in some more lucrative profession. As it is, he is compelled to a large extent to sacrifice his individuality, to degrade his intellect with drudgery which is beneath it, to stand as a mere intermediary or conduit-pipe between the student and knowledge. At the same time, if, out of the hundreds of students who pass through his hands in one academic year, he succeeds in inspiring even a single individual with a true desire for culture, his existence for that year is fully justified, for has he not added one member to the band of intellectual pioneers who will finally, we hope, take possession, in the name of humanity, of the whole universe of thought?

Come, my friends,  
Push off, and sitting well in order, smite  
The sounding furrows, for our purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western stars until we die.  
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;  
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles  
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.

## THE ETERNAL SILENCE

Around this rolling sphere of Man  
There lies a vast Unknown,  
Beyond the space that he can scan  
With tracts of starlight sown.

Beneath the shadow of th' Unknown  
From age to age he stands,  
And to the Void in wavering hope  
He stretches praying hands.

But in the Void no signs appear,  
It stands unbroken still,  
And from the void no word of cheer,  
But silence deep and chill.

And when the upstart race of men  
Has ceased from all this earth,  
When past is their brave strife with Fate,  
When past are Death and Birth;

When lifeless, sightless, blank and cold  
The home of man's poor breath;  
Still will this ball through space be rolled,  
In Silence deep as death.

## PART II

# REGINALD BATEMAN

## SOLDIER



**Reginald Bateman**

## THE WAR

*This address, which aroused much criticism in the press, is compiled from a newspaper report and some notes found among Professor Bateman's papers. It is probably incomplete, but is included because of the interest attaching to it.*

*The address was delivered before the University Y.M.C.A. on Sunday, 25 October 1914, on the eve of the departure of Professor Bateman's battalion. This was in the early days of the war, before the magnitude of the struggle had been generally realized, and there were those who had tried to persuade Professor Bateman that his higher duty lay at home. His address was prompted in part by this circumstance, and was a vindication of his enlisting. It was also prompted by a colleague's address from the same platform contrasting Samuel, who "hewed Agag in pieces," with Christ, Who commanded Peter to "put up the sword"—a plea for the peaceful settlement of personal and national disputes. Professor Bateman had for several years declined to address the University Y.M.C.A., because he had never before felt that he had a message for them.*

*So, although there is here much of the young man glorying in his strength and rejoicing to run the race, the address was not penned without thought and consideration.*

We hear much, perhaps too much, at the present time of the horrors of war; I wish to-day to speak to you of its blessings. Far be it from me to minimize the dark side of war. Only those who have actually experienced warfare can form an adequate idea of the horrors of campaigns and battlefields. But I wish to impress on you to-day the fact that war has compensations, and that it is by no means an unmitigated evil.

The Power Who manifests Himself to us in the phenomena of this Universe has apparently decreed that war should be the supreme test of both the nation and the individual. Biologically, struggle and self-sacrifice by one generation on behalf of the next are the conditions of the perpetuation of a species. A similar law of competition seems to hold for those aggregates of men which we call nations. History teaches that once a nation ceases to struggle or to be prepared to struggle for its existence, once it loses its military spirit and the willingness to fight to the death, if need be, for its national honour, its greatness invariably declines, and its growth ceases.

Of course, competition among nations may be carried on by other means than by war. Commercial rivalry, diplomatic rivalry, artistic rivalry, are all important means of progress, but war is the one supreme, the only entirely adequate test of a nation's spiritual quality.

Readiness for war is a token of national righteousness. In the sense in which I use the words, readiness for war does not mean a national spirit of militarism and aggressiveness, the spirit which has so often proved the downfall of great military powers. It is a readiness which is the result of a clean and vigorous national life during times of peace; a readiness which springs not so much from direct military training as from a high national idea of physical and mental fitness. The ideal soldier is not he who has been drilled into a military machine in times of peace, but he who is physically and mentally fit to become an efficient soldier, if need be, on short notice in time of war.

Self-sacrifice, self-denial, temperance, hardihood, discipline, obedience, order, method, organizing power, intelligence, purity of public life, chastity, industry, resolution are some only of the national and individual attributes which go towards producing the efficiency of modern armaments.

The broad rule which one deduces from a general survey of the history of human progress—a rule to which, no doubt, some exceptions can be found—is that the failure of nations to meet the test of war has always been the result of the decay of national morality, and that success in war has been an indication of national virtue. Right has not, indeed, always been might, but right has always tended to create might.

Rome conquered Greece because her sons were hardier, stronger, and more imbued with the spirit of self-sacrifice; Rome herself, centuries later, fell a victim to the inroads of the Goths because of the corruption of her national virtue and the decay of her military spirit through self-indulgence and immorality. The refined sensuality of the Roman could not withstand the rude virtue of the barbarian. "And generally," to quote Harold Wyatt, "history has repeatedly proved that efficiency in war, or for war, is God's test of a nation's soul. By that test it stands, or by that test it falls. This is the ethical content of competition. This is the determining factor of human history. This is the justification of war."

The terrible punishment provided by war for national depravity has been, perhaps, the chief stimulus in the progress of mankind. Behind the horror and havoc of the field of battle, therefore, is working a Power which makes for righteousness, and which has ordained that the nation which, from the righteousness of its cause and its fitness to defend that cause, best deserves the victory, shall win it.

Such is apparently the law of human progress, and we must accept it as we accept other seemingly unpleasant facts of our present existence; as we accept, for example, the fact of death. It is only by death that life is possible; it is only by struggle and self-sacrifice that national progress is possible.

Do not, therefore, be lulled into a sense of false security by the talk of universal peace, or by assertions that the present war must be the last in human history; but determine that, should you have the opportunity, you will do your part to make the nation to which you belong fit for its supreme test, the test of war. If you do not, you are a traitor to the past generations who won by struggle and self-sacrifice the heritage which you now enjoy, and to the future generations, who demand that you shall pass on that heritage, not diminished, but increased.

But take care that you do not mistake a national spirit of greed and aggressiveness for virtue. Remember Kipling's



warning that military force should be used only for the defence or enforcement of just rights or for those which you truly and firmly believe to be just.

The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The captains and the kings depart;  
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart.  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose  
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,  
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,  
Or lesser breeds without the Law—  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust  
In reeking tube and iron shard,  
All valiant dust that builds on dust  
And, guarding, calls not Thee to guard,  
For frantic boast and foolish word—  
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!

National greed and aggressiveness must, sooner or later, bring their own punishment.

Now let us look at war from the standpoint of the individual. The sacrifice of individual lives is for many men the most prominent fact of war. They look upon a field of battle, and are filled with dismay at the sight of heaped-up carnage and garments rolled in blood, but fail to find there the radiance of high endeavour and the glow of great achievement. Like Carlyle, in his famous *reductio ad absurdum* of war in the *Sartor*, they see only the physical side of war, and neglect its ethical and spiritual content. Of course, this is a piece of perversity on Carlyle's part.

What, speaking in quite unofficial language, is the net-purport and upshot of war? To my own knowledge, for example, there dwell and toil, in the British village of Dumdrudge usually some five hundred souls. From these, by certain "Natural Enemies" of the French, there are successively selected, during the French war, say thirty able-bodied men: Dumdrudge, at her own expense, has suckled and nursed them: she has, not without difficulty and sorrow, fed them up to manhood, and even trained them to crafts, so that one can weave, another build, another hammer, and the weakest can stand under thirty stone avoirdupois. Nevertheless, amid much weeping and swearing, they are selected; all dressed in red; and shipped away, at the public charges, some two-thousand miles, or say only to the south of Spain; and fed there till wanted. And now to that same spot, in the south of Spain, are thirty similar French artisans, from a French Dumdrudge, in like manner wending: till at length, after infinite effort, the two parties come into actual juxtaposition: and Thirty stands fronting Thirty, each with a gun in his hand. Straightway the word "Fire!" is given: and they blow the souls out of one another; and in place of sixty brisk useful craftsmen the world has sixty dead carcasses, which it must bury, and anew shed tears for. Had these men any quarrel? Busy as the Devil is, not the smallest! They lived far enough apart; were the entirest strangers; nay, in so wide a Universe, there was even, unconsciously, by Commerce, some mutual helpfulness between them. How then? Simpleton! their Governors had fallen-out; and instead of shooting one another, had the cunning to make these poor blockheads shoot. Alas, so it is in Deutschland, and hitherto in all other lands; still as of old, "what devilry soever Kings do, the Greeks must pay the piper!" In that fiction of the English Smollett, it is true, the final Cessation of War is perhaps prophetically shadowed forth; where the two Natural Enemies, in person, take each a Tobacco-pipe, filled with Brimstone; light the same, and smoke in one another's faces, till the weaker gives in: but from such predicted Peace-Era, what blood-filled trenches, and contentious centuries, may still divide us!

But what if these men of Dumdrudge are not blockheads at all, but high-souled, clear-sighted men? What if they do not go to the war because their rulers tell them to, but because they believe in the justice of their cause, and consider it not only a duty but a privilege to lay down their lives, if necessary, to maintain it?

Tennyson gets a nearer view of the truth in *Maud*, when he represents war as the purifier which purges the corruption of a too-long-continued peace, and which saves nation and individual alike from sloth and selfishness. Peace under a just and beneficent government is surely a blessing of the first magnitude. But those who enjoy it, and surely this

applies to us, must never forget at what price that blessing was bought and at what price it must be maintained. They must not grow petty and self-indulgent, and forget that they possess a heritage won for them by the sacrifice of others. Is it not far better that they should feel a thrill of patriotism at the rude touch of war, and die striking a blow for freedom, than that they should live to a dishonoured old age, seeking beggarly gain? Let us have less talk of the horrors of war and more talk of its blessings.

Most of those who speak of "the horrors of war" fail to recognize that it is those horrors which give war its great, its inestimable value. It would, no doubt, be very pleasant if war could be conducted in a polite and gentlemanly way, if it could be arranged that nobody would get killed, and that wounds and bloodshed would be reduced to a minimum. If that were so, we could all play at the game. But where would be our heroes, our hearts of triple steel? Where would be their victories over death and the fear of death, and their leading of captivity captive? We could then, like Falstaff, fill up our armies with "toasts-and-butter, with hearts in their bellies no bigger than pins' heads," and nobody would be a jot the worse. But war robbed of its terror would be war without glory, and one of the greatest and grandest of experiences which Destiny allows to man would no longer be possible. To endure gladly the most severe labour and hardship, to grapple with a mortal foe in deadly strife, a strife without mercy and without remorse, to pass through Hell unterrified, to wrest one's life by main force from the very jaws of death, and to do all this, not for pay, but for one's country, this is, perhaps, the very climax of human endeavour.

And what of the many who do not win through, but must leave their bodies upon the field of battle? We may not agree with Horace that such a death is "sweet and becoming," but surely it is sweeter and more becoming than the majority of deaths which men are called on to endure. Who would not rather die in the fullness of strength, with the shout of battle upon his lips, than succumb to the attacks of some disease which degrades the body and unhinges the mind, and pass away at last from a fleshly house that is no longer fit for the soul to inhabit, wringing the hearts of the bystanders with incoherent babblings?

The death roll of war, still far from complete, reaches back into the unfathomable past which lies far beyond the ken of man. The immensity of that death roll is dreadful to contemplate. But a past unstained by the blood of human strife would be more dreadful still. No doubt there would be to-day more people living in the world, but those high virtues which are realized to the full in war and war alone—courage and self-sacrifice—would be dead beyond all hope of resurrection. It was war which gave birth to the ideals of chivalry and honour; it is war which keeps those ideals alive in an age of sordid commercialism. It is the possibility of war, however remotely realized, which makes our young men keep their bodies clean and strong, and their souls free from that lowest form of selfishness, the selfishness of Parolles, which puts life before honour, which says:

"Let me live, sir, in a dungeon, in the stocks, or anywhere, so I may live."

When the more dangerous of lower animals have been tamed or exterminated, when locomotion by land, air, and sea has become safe and easy, when—greatest blessing of all—war has ceased to exist, then surely we shall see the return of the Golden Age. Perhaps so, but it will be a Golden Age enjoyed by a spineless and emasculated race of beings, who have forgotten the meaning of the words courage, honour, and self-sacrifice.

## IN THE TRENCHES

*An address given in Saskatoon to a number of returned men and colleagues on the first anniversary of the battle of St. Julien. Professor Bateman had been recalled from France to take command of the Saskatchewan Company of the Western Universities' Battalion.*

Twelve months ago, on April 22nd, when day broke upon the battlefields of Flanders, the new Canadian army, which had wallowed all winter in the mud of Salisbury, had yet to prove their mettle as fighting men. Ere the sun set that day, they had already won the title, given them throughout the Empire when the story of the fight was known, of

"Glorious Canadians." The reputation won at Ypres and St. Julien was fully maintained at the battles of Festubert and Givenchy.

Although we soldiers of the Second Contingent experienced fighting on a smaller scale than our comrades of the First, we had quite enough to enable us to realize, as one who has not been there never can, a great deal of what the first lot went through. I think it is no exaggeration to say that no soldiers of the Second or succeeding contingents think it necessary to look anywhere but to the First Canadians for their highest example of self-sacrifice and devotion to duty.

I have heard people at home complain that they find it hard to get any information from returned soldiers as to their experience, or to get any real idea of what the fighting is like. I think the reason is that we are afraid of giving people a false impression, and that it is impossible to make people grasp the reality of conditions of warfare which have no parallel in history. Everybody at home expects a tale of glory and heroism, but the days of pomp and circumstance of battle are over, and it is only the ideals for which we are fighting that can dignify the mean and ugly reality of present-day war. Besides, when I look back upon the one or two little affairs out of the common in which I have taken part, my impressions are a curious mixture of distinctness and vagueness, as of a dream or nightmare rather than of a real experience, and such impressions are difficult to put into words.

I was in and out of the trenches for six months as an N.C.O., and was in the front line every time but one, so that as far as the ordinary routine of trench life goes, I am qualified to speak. The shortest phrase I know of which attempts to sum up life in the trenches is "Days of unendurable monotony and moments of indescribable fear." That phrase, as far as it goes, is a good description, but it leaves out two important aspects of trench life, the humorous and the picturesque. It is only a sense of humour that can make the monotony of trench life endurable. Any man who went up to the front line expecting to find the heroic defenders grimly defiant and serious over their task would probably be more shocked than amused to find men busy arguing over the division of a pot of jam while Fritz was generously spraying our line with shrapnel; or to discover that some fellow was more elated over having swiped someone else's brazier than if he had bayoneted a dozen Fritzes; or to discover that the breaking of a rum jar was considered a greater calamity by the whole company than if our trench had been blown to pieces.

I have often sat in my dug-out, just a little way down the communication trench, and listened to a ration party going up to the front line in the dark with their heavy loads, wading through mud, plunging into holes, falling over broken trench mats, and I have heard with great pleasure the flow of language; it was immense, nothing like it is to be heard from any other troops in the world's history.

And then there was the picturesque side. My recollections of the trenches come back to me chiefly as a series of pictures.

I see the velvety blackness of the night, cut by streaks of light as the flares go up continually along the front, as far as the eye can see, then shed their weird radiance over the mysterious region of No Man's Land, while every moving thing beneath their light lies still as death till darkness comes again to hide them from the searching eyes that never cease to scan the space between the trenches. I see the muffled sentries at their posts on the firing step; I hear the irregular *crack, crack* of rifle fire along the line as they shoot at a flash from the other trench, or at some moving object dimly seen through the darkness; then comes the sharp crackle of rifle fire or the *rat-a-tat-tat* of the machine-gun as we open upon one of Fritz's working parties. I see the flash and hear the bang of bursting shrapnel, or the distant *woosh* and *cr-r-rump* of the high explosive; or there is the dull *pop* from Fritz's line, and high in the air a tract of light makes its way towards our trench. We hear the familiar *whoo-oo-oo-oosh*, and we know that one of the dreaded aerial torpedoes is on its way; we wait with horrible suspense for the sickening thud and roar of the explosion, and wonder whether it has got anyone this time, and whether the next is coming our way; or we are roughly awakened from the deep sleep of exhaustion by someone excitedly pulling at our legs and shouting, "Gas!" We crawl quickly out of the dug-out into the darkness to find our comrades "standing to" all along the trench in their weird gas helmets, and presently discover with relief that a nervous listening post has mistaken the mist, which is rolling up from Fritz's trench, for the dreaded chlorine. Or we turn from our posts as we hear the shuffle of the stretcher-bearers along the trench, and we wish some unlucky (or lucky) comrade a safe passage to Blighty. Then there are nights to look back upon around the battered old brazier in the dug-out, when things were quiet, and we smoked a pipe or sang a song, and thought of what we should do when we got that leave that never seemed to come, or the "rest" which had been promised us every time we came out of the trenches for the last three months. And then there was the tramp back to billets through the shell-torn streets of a deserted Flemish village,

and the blessed relief of flinging down the pack and rolling up in our blankets for the first straight sleep of many nights.

But best of all to look back upon are the good comrades we found in the trenches, whom we knew we could trust to the death, if need be. However much we appreciate the comfort of home and the kindness of friends here, the deepest thoughts of every returned soldier are now, and will ever be while this war lasts, with the boys they left behind them, "holding the line."

## ON THE DEATH OF A COMRADE

*Written in England while impatiently waiting to get back to France. Professor Bateman had been recalled from the trenches, where he was sergeant, to become major of the Western Universities' Battalion, and then was forced to wait in England after this unit was broken up, while in France his former battalion was preparing for Vimy. This letter was written shortly after its capture.*

April 29th, 1917.

Dear J. V.,

"Letter received and contents noted."

I can understand how you feel about Maunsell's death. Personally, I have long ago given up theorizing about what may or may not be at the back of phenomena. I confine myself to what I can see and know and reason about, and I find that I have quite as much as I can handle even in that narrow sphere. Once one gets into the region of the supernatural, one man's dream or speculation is just as good or as worthless as another's, for neither has any foundation in experience, and experience gives us our only possible basis for the construction of theories about life.

So, though you may allow your thoughts at times to get out of hand and wander about gropingly in a nebulous unknown, you ought not to allow any baseless theories that result to disturb your peace of mind. If you attach any importance to such propositions about the unknown, you can find plenty of comforting ones evolved by greater brains than yours, which you would do better to accept than allow yourself to be worried and made less effective for the business of life by the pessimistic result of your own thinking.

Constant brain work has a tendency to make a man morbid in his speculations. A free, open-air life, practical problems and contact with men who do things rather than theorize about them is a great corrective. No one yet has gone anywhere near solving the riddle of the unknown, and it may fairly be supposed that the human brain is at present incapable of tackling the problem successfully. It may be that the perpetual struggle after a solution may, in ages to come, result in the evolution of a brain which can find an answer to the riddle of life, in the same way as the constant reaching of the giraffe after food resulted in the production of a neck sufficiently long to solve the giraffe's food problem.

Meantime, we must be content to get along with such knowledge as we have, or else accept a supernatural revelation which is bound at the best to be a bit dim and unsatisfactory, because it is communicated to us by means of the same imperfect brain.

Personally, I don't think it matters very much what you believe about the supernatural if you base your actions upon a sane view of what experience has shown to be best. To get and give as much happiness as possible seems to be our plain duty, and if abnormalities on a tremendous scale like this war crop up, it is the duty of every one to get to work and sacrifice, if necessary, his own chance of happiness in order to restore a state of things where happiness is possible for others. (By happiness, I mean contentment, usually temporary, with things as they are.)

Experience has given us ample proof of where happiness is to be found as far as it can be realized in this life, and every one ought to be able to avoid those actions which would seem to bring happiness, but which have been shown by

experience to result in the long run in dissatisfaction. Of course, very few are wise enough to accept the experience of others, and most men have to get stung many times over before they learn the lessons which countless billions before them learned in precisely the same way.

Curiously enough, the highest happiness of which humans are capable seems to be found in the sacrifice of self. Maunsell's magnificent devotion to duty and splendid death are of far greater value to us than his continuing to live could have been, and though he could not have fully realized that fact himself, he certainly would not have been happy if he had declined the privilege of giving up his own happiness that general happiness might be secured for the world, thereby paradoxically finding the greatest happiness of all. If he still continues to live, and can look back on earthly experiences, he would probably not desire to change his own fate.

You can see from all this that my desire to get back to the front is, in the main, selfish. I simply cannot be content to stay here handling a job which absorbs scarcely any of my ability or energy, and which could be as well or better done by some one who is not fit to fight. I went away from the front with the full intention of returning there with men whom I had trained to take their part in the scrap. I have been prevented by circumstances from carrying out my scheme, and I shall always regret that I did not consider that those who were actually at the front with me had a greater claim on me than any others. If I had stayed on, I should have got my commission and should have valued it much more than the one I actually did get. I might have been killed, but I was prepared for that, and I think there is no better way a man can die. It is comparatively seldom in the world's history that a man gets the chance to die splendidly. Most deaths are somewhat inglorious endings to not very glorious careers. A war like the present gives a man a chance to cancel at one stroke all the pettiness of his life.

Therefore I think it is up to me to do all I can to get back to France and finish what I began. If I fail to get there, it won't be my fault, and I won't worry about it. If I depended on the powers that be, I should probably be here for the duration of the war, and it is possible that I may be. But I am determined that it is not going to be my fault if I am.

I did not intend, when I sat down, to write you more than a brief note. I think my first sentence shows that. All the rest came of itself, and I hope you won't be bored stiff by reading it.

Best of luck in the "Wall,"[\*]

Yours ever,  
REG.

If you are ever up against it for cash, or if there is any other way that I can help you, I shall be very sore with you if you don't let me know.

If you want some good light reading to take your mind off Syriac and other ancient noises by which people communicated one with the other, try some of O. Henry's books—*The Four Million*, *Options*, *Whirligigs* (very light reading and amusing), Hodder and Stoughton.

[\*] Wall Biblical Scholarship, Dublin University.

[End of *Reginald Bateman, Teacher and Soldier*, by Reginald Bateman]