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Oscar Wilde
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Vol. 4

No Information

of their objects. The writer confesses again and again that it is a burden to him to have to invent even the semblance of a story to link together the few overwrought *tableaux*, of which two or three are passionate and most are simply sensuous. Throughout we are reminded that we are dealing with an author who had wished to be a painter, and we are not reminded in the pleasantest way. We feel that words are being made to do the work of forms and colours, and that in such work words have only one advantage, which a temperate public might think questionable. When the voluptuous impression has to be built up slowly, touch by touch, as one detail is described after another, a reader who wishes to gloat upon such impressions feels that for him the wish of the Greek glutton is realised, and that he is almost as well off as if he had as long a throat as a crane. And though, even with this drawback, the book has glow and splendour enough to be intoxicating, it leaves more than one unpleasant aftertaste. When Fortunio prides himself upon a collection of gigantic panoramas and dissolving views to supply a background at his choice to the scarcely less theatrical gorgeousness of his seraglio in the midst of Paris, it is surprising that an author who makes so many returns upon himself should not have stopped to sneer at the inevitable imperfection of an artificial paradise, even when fitted up regardless of expense. It gives quite a new meaning to the primaevaeval curse, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," when we see that the last outcome of cultivated luxury is to immerse life again in the inorganic splendour from which it was evolved.

It was not an accident that Gautier occupied himself more and more as time went on with *feuilletons*; it may seem a harsh thing to say, and yet we doubt if he would have resented it, the *fêtes* of the Tuileries were after all his realised ideal, so far as it could be realised. No doubt they left something to be desired, no doubt he and the public for whom he described them had to make believe a good deal; but then descriptions of a luxury which never existed, even at the Tuileries or St. Cloud, are rather like a Barmecide's feast, and require the guests to make believe a good deal more. At first sight it may appear curious that the will should be the one element of ordinary human nature which such a writer was never weary of exaggerating; but the will which Gautier idealises is not the will which makes efforts, which conquers difficulties, which carries out plans adapted to circumstances. It is a kind of counterfeit omnipotence, an imperious resolve which excludes the idea of resistance, which is sated with success, and is only roused to desire by the appearance of a difficulty too familiar to be endured, and then must wait in helpless arrogance to be served by opportunity or broken by destiny. It is only in a single work, which, with all its vigour and liveliness, is hardly characteristic (*Le Capitaine Fracasse*), that any ethical effect is produced in the process; and the *Duc de Vallombreuse* is after all a rather pale imitation of "Edyrn, son of Nudd," and the whole story is a picturesque medley of somewhat incongruous elements of which few are original. Chiquita is really a *picaresque* version of *Mignon* and *Fenella*. Sigognac himself is a very superior walking gentleman, a sort of cross between the Master of Ravenswood and Quintin Durward; Augustin and his scarecrow brigands, Lamourde and his society of chivalrous cutthroats, are fresher, but the latter at any rate belong rather to the nineteenth century than to the seventeenth; they are simply Romantics of a somewhat extreme type transported back into their golden age, the age before the *Grand Siècle*.

He did not succeed better in *La Belle Jenny*; the story is really on the level of G. P. R. James, and the device of a secret society for correcting the decrees of Providence is

hardly worth the mystery which is ingeniously maintained up to the point when the disclosure would produce most effect, if only there were anything to disclose. The book is put together with the cleverness of a practised workman, but the real value is in the isolated scenes. Gautier only found his full originality and power when he was far away from the novel of action and confined himself to a chronicle of moods and desires. His greatest work is *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, and his most perfect is *Spirite*. Perhaps the fact that his greatest work was produced so early, when he was still under five-and-twenty, may be taken for a sign that he had entered upon a direction in which real progress was almost impossible; considering the perfection of his latest work, it certainly cannot be taken for a proof that he had frittered his powers away. Both turn to a great extent upon the same subject, the perplexities of a hero who does not know whom to love, and yet is in love or half in love with loving. In *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, the beloved meets him halfway to find out what men are like who say they love, and parts when she has found the secret; in *Spirite*, the beloved will not seek, and a series of small fatalities hinders her being sought, and so she has to wait for death until she is free to reveal herself. In both the conception is better than the execution. *Spirite*, with all its beauty, is undeniably thin and pale, and the ideal background is a rather unfortunate and wholly incredible mixture of Catholicism and "spiritualism." *Mademoiselle de Maupin* is almost as much overloaded with discussion as *Wilhelm Meister*; the story stands still while the hero is expounding his objections to Christianity, which may be summed up in a preference of the Venus of Milo to the Crucifix, and while the characters are discussing how *As You Like It* ought to be acted; not to mention such superficial blemishes as the way in which the story varies from letters to narrative and back again. No one can be surprised that the book created a scandal, and yet it might be difficult to assign a reason why it is so much more objectionable than others. Perhaps the nearest approach to give an explanation would be to say that, without being remarkably wicked, it is more than remarkably shameless; morality cannot exist without some kind of conventional decorum, and in *Mademoiselle de Maupin* there is no decorum whatever; apparently because the writer did not understand the meaning of the word. In general his attitude to morality is rather friendly than otherwise; it rather resembles the feeling of a savage who has been impressed by a missionary and is inclined to dilute his teaching for the benefit of still heathen friends. The result of works like *La Toison d'Or* and *Jean et Jeannette*, and even *Celle-ci et Celle-là*, is that, as morality does not exist (having been abolished in the necessary and beneficent reaction against *classiques* and *épiciers*), it would be well to invent a little, especially as a little will go a long way. During his life he was best known by his critical and descriptive works. Their merits are sufficiently obvious. He had a splendid, copious, and precise vocabulary; his attention was always at leisure and never asleep: perhaps both these qualifications may be traced to an intense and unoccupied vitality. In all his works he describes too much, simply because it is easier to attend to still life than to invent incident; not like Balzac, because he attaches himself with the whole force of his genius to every corner of his subject. The same keen and indiscriminate curiosity makes his travels more valuable than his criticism. It is said that he praised for very indolence, because it was less trouble than to invent reasons for a qualified judgment; but the fact is that he cared more for new and vivid sensations than for positive beauty: he gives his measure as a critic by the opening paragraph of *Les Grottesques*, where he lays down as an aphorism that for-

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and the
THE ACADEMY.

A Record of Literature, Learning, Science, and Art.

"INTER SILVAS ACADEMI QUÆRERE VERUM."

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General Literature.

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

IF *Les Jeunes France* had gone to Sir Piercie Shafton for their vocabulary (and they often went further and fared worse), they might have called *Théophile Gautier* "our Resipiscence," though he was the author of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, which has fair claims to be regarded as the most audacious book of a singularly audacious movement. "Our Good-nature" would perhaps have been a more appropriate, certainly a more obvious, sobriquet, and it would have at bottom included the other. He had a very rich and wholesome nature, which he was not long in discovering was really enough to live upon, and as he grew older, he returned to it with increasing satisfaction. It must be added that the circumstances under which his talent first produced itself were of a kind to give full play to his irreverence and a frankness so unscrupulous as to approach to cynicism, and that the excess of every kind of stimulus which surrounded him had brought on a crisis of over-excitement morbid in proportion to the intense vitality and robust constitution of the patient.

The works of this "period of storms and stress," published during the early years of the revolution of July, are morbid whenever they are serious; *Albertus* (the subject of which was repeated with an immense gain in clearness and suavity in a prose *nouvelle*, *La Morte amoureuse*) is perhaps the best of them, and it shows clearly how unlikely the author was to remain in the repose of nightmares; into which he had only strayed because the craving for the *outré* finds its most obvious satisfaction among horrors. The poem is lurid and voluptuous enough, but all the while the poet is laughing at his own pretensions, and at the method of his school, and when he takes leave of the book with a call for a bottle of burgundy and a volume of Rabelais, we feel no doubt of his speedy recovery; it is simply a want of convictions, strong enough to control and direct the tumult of his desires to some object too distant to be disappointing, which made him hanker after the images of the charnel-house and the Thebaid. All the poems of this period are musical and eloquent, but they are too incoherent, too much the expression of a discontent that founds itself on temporary circumstances to be exactly fitted for immortality, and though the

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latest of them, the *Comedy of Death*, has a comparatively developed structure, this only serves to bring out more clearly the poverty of positive thought which underlies its imaginative splendours.

On the whole we are inclined to think that he really did himself less injustice in the outrageous humour of his comic works, though the riotous realism is often carried not only beyond the limits of conventional propriety but of aesthetic decorum. One cannot help laughing at the young men who meet to enact one of the orgies described by Sue, Dumas, and Hugo, when they provide mattresses on which to throw their mistresses out of window, and take off their shoes to trample on them, but one hardly feels that to the great public, which never had the misfortune of living with them, these heroes are really worth powder and shot. His later grotesque, *Une Larme du Diable*, is a good deal more ambitious and upon the whole less satisfactory; such merit as it has is to be found in its absolute *naïveté*, in the frank credulity of the whole thing; it is very profane and not very amusing, but one feels that the author is really trying by such light as he has to fancy what God and His saints talk about in Paradise; it is a favourable specimen of one of Plato's three classes of lies, those which are invented to take the place of an unknown truth.

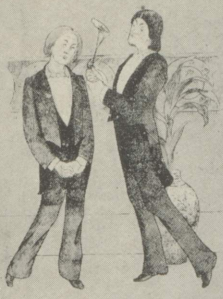
Certainly there is no reason for ascribing his profanity to anything like intentional disrespect: in one of his later works, the *Roman de la Momie*, published in 1863, he goes out of his way to patronise the plagues of Egypt, and even to rehabilitate the horns of Moses. He was a pagan rather than a rationalist, and when, as he grew older, he opened his eyes under the influence of Baudelaire to the element of petulance there is in neo-paganism, his hearty dislike to the humanitarian jargon by which the Romanticists, from Victor Hugo downwards, tried to compensate the absence of both historical knowledge and coherent artistic aims, took more and more the character of a determined dislike to every possible theory of every kind of progress. The strongest of his personal convictions was expressed by the Oriental proverb quoted by Fortunio, that it is "better to be standing than walking, better to be sitting than standing, better to be sleeping than waking, and better to be dead than sleeping." Such a temper, of course, must deprive the greater part of the ordinary motives of literature of nearly all their interest; nothing remains but to excite the desires by elaborate descriptions

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Art. 11. Quatre Compagnies

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Polka
 On U. L. ROECKEL'S Celebrated Song

By **L. C. Desormes.**

FRANCIS & TAYLOR, 11, N. W. CORNER OF 11th & W. ST. W.

The Three Young Men of Ware



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By **L. C. Desormes.**

FRANCIS & TAYLOR, 11, N. W. CORNER OF 11th & W. ST. W.

18 Nov 1892

THE

TWO BOOKS.

Two great illustrated books have just appeared, and they may be bracketed together in a brief notice. The first in size and in importance is Mr. Harry Quilter's "Preferences" (Swan, Sonnenschein). This is in the nature of a summary by this eminent critic. It is a large volume, most beautifully printed, and it gives the author's account by illustration and by exposition, of his preferences in art life and literature. It contains the quintessence of all he has felt and thought on these great subjects, and especially on art. The general plan of it is exceedingly simple. Of the innumerable fine things that he has seen, and of the true things about them that he has tried to say, he has here selected those that will best bear the test of his experience and of his matured judgment. They are but his "preferences," after all, and he gives them only for what they are worth, yet with so much to justify them that no one can accuse him of caprice. The net result, for the book-lover, is an *édition de luxe* of the most exquisite reproductions of modern art—British art mainly, though not exclusively—for here and there we have Millet and also Thoughts on French Art. It is a sort of Keepsake of Victorian art, though a keepsake of Brobdignag. We hardly dare think of the cost of preparation—in the good paper, the good print, the delicately wrought illustrations, and the deeply meditated cover of gold and white which binds them all. The book might have been called "Hobbies," for no one to whom the beautiful was not a hobby could have brought all these things together in this form. However, "Preferences" will do excellently well. Growing old in the criticism of art is like growing old in the criticism of life itself—it brings charity. It softens and harmonises the crudities of judgment, and enables a man to see that there was always much to be said on the other side—if he had known how to say it, or his enemies had cared. Mr. Quilter is now content to tell us why he loves certain great modern painters. His hates lie buried in the periodicals from which some, though by no means all, of these notices have been extracted, with retouches however that make them virtually new. In one section he gives us the history of Pre-Raphaelitism, with examples of all its happiest achievements. This is something like a history, in contrast with the many that have been attempted, and it should give the volume enduring value as a document. That movement still exists as an influence. Its decline as a school was due much more to a certain want of cohesion rather than to the assaults of the enemy from without. The men fell away from the phalanx one by one, and even Mr. Ruskin ceased gradually to be their spokesman, though he has never lost his sympathy for their aims and their work. Dante Rossetti put it in a form not necessarily for publication when he said that the great critic was at first helpful, but that there came a time when he "funked, and hooked it to Switzerland." Yet he was never that authorised official exponent of the system that some people have believed. At the best of times he spoke, after his wont, a good deal more for himself than for others. From the first Rossetti regarded him rather as an inspired picture buyer than as a teacher and guide. All the brethren have their place here, with illustrations. Ford Madox Brown heads the list as the teacher of Rossetti and of Holman Hunt, and as the modern Manchester martyr, an artist of genius decorating a Town Hall under the watchful eye of a Board of Aldermen. Rossetti is seen in many fine examples—in purest beauty of form, perhaps, as distinct from the beauty of feeling and imaginative sentiment, in *La Bella Mano*. It might otherwise be described as only a woman's hand, but it is such a hand! Then come Millais, Burne-Jones and a large and miscellaneous group of the "influenced." Mr. Quilter is disposed to regard Pre-Raphaelitism as a kind of measles which everybody in art has had, or is to have. Mr. Du Maurier and Mr. Linley Sambourne, he says, have them still. But, beyond all this, Watts, and Leighton, and Orchardson, Holl and Fildes, and a host of others have their place here. It is a superb and a comprehensive work. Poor Amy Levy, besides, has her monograph, for the preferences are of literature as well as of art. The book, in one of its

aesthetes, J. P. R. B. etc.

French paper.

Punch cartoons. (Several of Wilde)

Herbert Campbell as
"The Jumbo Estate"

1880-1883.

Programme of "Aesthetic
Quadrille?"

Proof pull of a long
article on Wilde.

Large collection of reviews
of "The Aesthetic Movement"

Formerly in possession of Walter Hamilton, author of
The Aesthetic Movement in England etc. Note in his hand
with his
bookplate

March 1842
winter to weekly with
article on Wilde.

3a.l.s.

Reviews of
The
Aesthetic
Movement.

monument of English political life, and he would have given something could he at once have jumped on shore. His bright, noble face glowed with enthusiasm, and some of the matter-of-fact passengers smiled as they passed him on their up and down turns. Farther on the Tower was reached, and almost passed before Zollwitz saw it. A feeling of disappointment laid hold of him; he had believed to see some stately building, as the home of so many bright and dark pages of England's history, and, he saw nothing but some dull-looking mean turrets, and try as he would, even his imagination could not at once fasten itself round those precincts to people them with the mighty folks of the past.

The 'Concordia' moored alongside, and Zollwitz, after the necessary preliminaries, was whirled away in a cab to an hotel near Blackfriars Bridge. Soon snugly settled, he chose a bedroom with a look-out over the Thames, and rested; his portmanteau near him unopened, the waiter's demands about refreshment unanswered.

Zollwitz had no eye or ear for anything else but that river below him, but that life around him—the half-stillness of Sunday night lending his surroundings a peculiar charm. Zollwitz sat and looked, the shadows gathered deeper, and he sat still and saw not the misery, the penury, the want, the crime, the degradation, the greed, the ugly human shapes of the great, the mighty city around him; he heard not the stifled cough, the low wail, the beggar's whine, the drunkard's curse, the profligate's profane speech, the prostitute's importunities, the thief's plans, the murderer's desperate resolve—he saw none and heard none of these; to him the city there lying off the old river Thames, the city where Shakespeare and Milton had lived, where Elizabeth had ruled, where the right of national freedom had been maintained with the sword, where even now a free national assembly existed, in which Hampden, Chatham, and Fox had once spoken, to him a golden aureola surrounded those dark houses, a bright effervescence shone on the gas-reflecting waves of that sombre river, and some inward voice seemed to tell him that here, in this men's wilderness, he would find the acme of his desires! Low he bent his head, it fell on his arm as it rested on the open window; a distant evening bell chimed somewhere, and fluttering across his inner unexplained consciousness came the memories of the day at Castle Freiberg; when papa and mamma came no more, and he wept with Christian. And there, among the distant, dark masses, something drew him onward, as if the key-note to that early grief was hidden there!

Zollwitz dreamt on, but his nature soon exhausted itself. He roused himself, stood up, and, in the full vigour of a noble, ardent nature, resolved to find here his fate!

[To be continued.]

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

WHILE most of the distinguished authors of France have spoken, in different tones, about the present war, one pleasant voice is notably silent. M. Renan is calm and argumentative; M. Victor Hugo is passionately eloquent; M. About—perhaps it is better not to try to characterise the utterances of M. About; but Théophile Gautier holds his peace. He is consistent, if not very patriotic, and busies himself no more with politics now than when, as a boy, he published his first volume of verses in the tumult of the revolution of July; or when he passed the year 1848 in polishing his ‘Émaux et Camées.’

Our English carelessness about foreign literature does injustice to no one more than to M. Gautier: about him our ignorance is at its deepest. De Musset came to us with the interest of a hero of romance: one episode alone of his life furnished material for three novels. We felt that he was akin to Chatterton, to Keats, to Shelley, to all the inheritors of unfulfilled renown. His poetry has the direct fire of passion, his novel deals with real life, acutely felt in pleasure and sorrow. In the same way the political life of Lamartine gave interest to his poems; the sombre genius of Baudelaire was unrecognised till death brought his strange character into relief; the fame of Sainte-Beuve is that of the scholar rather than of the poet. M. Gautier is neither a man of romantic experience nor a politician, nor, in any wide sense, a scholar. Yet his life is pleasant to read of, for it has been passed in the main current of French Art, and he himself has told his experiences gracefully and modestly. He has seen Balzac devour his favourite food, sardines and bread and butter, and then stretch his huge limbs in the short sleep which he allowed himself. He has sat at the banquets of the great novelist, where there was every food that man could desire, but the bread was forgotten; he has watched by the ‘mattress grave’ of Heinrich Heine; he has smoked opium with Charles Baudelaire; and lent poor Murger the *louis* of which he was always in search.

The character, too, of M. Gautier is worth study, for in him a peculiar geniality and gaiety has conquered that ‘strange disease of modern life,’ that *ennui* and sadness which never left De Senancour and Chateaubriand. In him the malady took the strangest form, and he has left materials for a psychological study of a melancholy more *bizarre* than any in the collection of Burton. But after all it is less for himself and

for his recollections than for his art that M. Gautier deserves to be known. The love of beauty for itself is the motive of his work, and lives in every development of his genius. As a poet he deals less with passion than emotion and sentiment: to him as to Wordsworth clouds and flowers are dear as sources of thoughts deep, melancholy, and tender; but he finds beauty in places untrodden by the pious feet of the elder singer, and bestows a care far greater on form and melody. As a novelist he does not deal with common every-day life; to make us forget the world as it is, to take us into a world of pure phantasy is his aim. Among characters and scenes like those of modern life he throws some element of difference, and the story becomes real and vivid from the clearness of the writer's vision and the perfection of his style; dream-like from the change in all relations, the absence of all limits to what may possibly happen; the absence also of all moral. We live as in a dream, calmly interested and secure from surprise, among events and characters vaguely felt to be wildly surprising. To the task of criticism, and it is as a critic that he is best known even in France, M. Gautier brings his unwearied geniality, his fluency, his power of appreciation. He sees the work of art, as he sees human life, in a magic mirror of his own. His criticism adds new elements of beauty to the picture or the play he criticises. To the reader the object of criticism, however familiar, becomes another thing, a source of fresh delight; as real life itself is transfigured, removed into a purer atmosphere of pleasure, by the touch of the poet. Yet there are not wanting traces that his profession of critic is not altogether to his liking, that he still remembers the time when he scoffed at the *métier de feuilletonniste*. One of his most graceful little poems, 'Après le Feuilleton,' is a hymn of delight at having finished his article:

Avec mes vieux rêves pour hôtes
Je boirai le vin de mon cru :
Le vin de ma propre pensée,
Vierge de toute autre liqueur,
Et que, par la vie écrasée,
Répand la grappe de mon cœur.

It would be of course a mistake to suppose that the qualities, which we have attempted to sketch, of the Gautier of to-day, have always been the same. The author of 'Romans et Contes,' innocent and charming fantasies, is no longer the young gentleman who wrote 'Mademoiselle de Maupin,' and was 'as sad as night, for very wantonness.' 'Les Émaux et Camées' are the work of a genius greatly altered since the composition of 'Albertus;' and the refined critic of 1870 is a different man from the novelist who, in 1834, was so severe an enemy of journalism. The influence of various schools, of time, experience, and travel have changed M. Gautier, and as in every stage of his career his work is an expression of his personality, to appreciate his genius we require some knowledge of his history.

Théophile Gautier was born at Tarbes in 1811; his youth was therefore spent in that sad time of exhaustion in France; of scepticism and *ennui* which De Musset has described in his 'L'Enfant du Siècle.' The circumstances of his age and country affected Gautier, as they affected Sainte-Beuve, De Musset, Chateaubriand, with a peculiar melancholy. The French have a name for this evil, more common perhaps among them than with us, *La Maladie de René*. It is the result of want of faith—a want of faith natural to a generation which had seen almost every possible experiment in the science of human life tried, which keenly remembered the dreams and delusions of the Revolution, which had watched each experiment fail, each dream disappear, while the Bourbons and 'the white terror' were restored, and the things that should be seemed to repeat the things that had been. In such an age, men turn from their own dissatisfaction to look on human life as a whole. Everywhere they see the same failure; through the vast desert of time our race seems to pass, and to sink without trace in the sands. All hopes have been frustrated, we sin as our fathers sinned, and sleep as they sleep: all creeds have at first been bright in promise, and the same twilight of the gods has fallen on the younger as on the elder faiths. In this wide and cheerless vision, the existence of individuals grows dwarfed and worthless. We are so frail and fleeting that our life seems scarcely worthy to be partaken of. Our desires, vague and vast as they originally are, meet in all nature with no permanent object in which to rest. For one who has realised this idea of human life and who has lost all faith in a Divine government and a Divine event there remain but few resources. He may make his own sadness an object to him, and deck it with graces of poetic language. 'Mon chagrin était devenu une occupation qui remplissait tous mes moments,' says Chateaubriand's René. To such a character nature will be a friend and a comforter, quiet and lovely in all her changes, silently and graciously enduring the lot of corruption and birth. Thus we find Obermann passing his days in wandering among the mountains and lakes of Switzerland, 'drawing the quiet night into his blood,' and soothing his fever with the cool hill winds, the scents and sounds of the pine forests. So, too, we find René climbing the summit of Etna, and 'weeping over the mortals whose abodes were scarcely visible,' as indeed he had through all his life 'before his eyes a creation at once immense and imperceptible, an abyss ever open beneath his feet.'

A more practical anodyne is that of Art. Whatever in the world be fleeting, beauty at least is fair for a season, and Art, rendering that beauty at once permanent and refined, gives vividness and endurance to existence. It was to Art, then, that Théophile Gautier devoted himself with a devotion which has never been shaken, though it has taken different forms of worship under the influence of different schools. At first, like many men who have distinguished themselves in letters, like

Goethe and Thackeray, he wished to become a painter. His studies left traces in his style, especially in his criticism; but he soon deserted painting for another art, whose instrument he employs with natural grace and mastery. His first volume of poems, published in 1830, showed more promise in their form than in their matter, but they were the means of introducing him to the company of writers who were at that moment giving a new stimulus and direction to French literature. Under the guidance of Alfred de Musset and Victor Hugo a new school had risen, the school of Romanticism, which in its origin and history has so many resemblances to our English Pre-Raffaellitism. The friends of Hugo looked back from the so-called classic poetry of Racine and Corneille to the earlier songs and singers of France; in them they found more of truth and passion, of melody and variety. The old French, and the old French metres, a language and a form of verse more apt for poetic expression than the speech of the *grand siècle*, attracted them; as the early efforts of Italian painting—quaint, fresh, and earnest—attracted Hunt and Rossetti. There was a Romantic as in the sixteenth century there had been a Classic revival. The beauty of sacred art was recognised by artists who lacked the belief; a Mediæval sadness, an ascetic pallor, took the place of the roses and lilies of Greuze. Poets deserted the Alexandrine metre for the many melodies of Ronsard, of Villon, and Eustache Deschamps; they despised the ‘unities,’ they exaggerated passion, and Medea, or at least Lucretia Borgia, began to slay her children and lovers *coram populo*.

The influence of the first is very clearly traceable in M. Gautier's second volume of poems, ‘Albertus,’ and ‘La Comédie de la Mort.’ Of the first of these the author confesses:

J'en préviens les mères de famille
Ce que j'écris n'est pas pour les petites filles,
Dont on coupe le pain en tartines.—Mes vers
Sont des vers de jeune homme.

‘Albertus’ is a story of *diablerie*, lustful, terrible, grotesque, like the carvings of an old cathedral. ‘La Comédie de la Mort,’ too, owes part of its inspiration to the Middle Ages. M. Gautier's genius, naturally glad and *débonnaire*, fond of beauty as a Greek might have been, and careless of the morrow, is darkened by contemplation of the Mediæval idea of death. The Deaths that Holbein loved to design dance through the poetry of Romanticism. Heine liked to bring in the grim figure, and our own Oxford poet, Beddoes, wrote ‘Death's Jest-book,’ and revelled in ‘every age, every fashion, and figure of death.’ So in ‘La Comédie’ the poet wanders on *le jour des Morts*, in a Parisian cemetery, among the forgotten crosses where no wreath is laid, and the long grass of graves where now no one comes to weep. The unremembered dead arise around him: Don Juan with a ghastly gaiety like that of

the 'Vision of Sin;' Faust weary of knowledge; and Napoleon 'who can tell what glory is.'

Shall one shed tears or fall to laughter
At sight of all these poor old dead?

There is a note of modern mockery amid the Mediæval gloom, and after all the moral is the Greek one.

Hâtons-nous, hâtons-nous; votre vie, ô Théone,
Est un cheval ailé que le Temps éperonne.
Hâtons-nous d'en user.

Not good for edification, but edification was never the aim of M. Gautier's art.

He proved this, and made his mark a permanent one in French literature, by the publication, in 1834, of 'Mademoiselle de Maupin.' This book, in spite of its perfect and alluring style, is not a pleasant one to read or to write about. It is perhaps best described in the author's own words as 'the child of "Werther" and of "Manon Lescaut"'—sad and unsatisfied as Goethe's, voluptuous and graceful as Prévost's romance. A young man, D'Albert, tells in letters to a friend the story of his *ennui*, his wretched life, his vague desires. These letters are sad as those of Obermann, but with a difference. D'Albert does not despair because he is without faith or hope, desolate and un comforted. He has no regret, because Christianity is for him as if it had never been. His melancholy arises from the impossibility of attaining such complete enjoyment of perfect beauty—such unbroken delight of colour and clear air—such strength and mastery of sensuous life, as his unmeasured desires suggest. He is consumed with love of the ideal and the impossible. 'If thou comest too late, ah my Ideal, I shall have no more power to love thee. My heart is as a dove-cote full of doves; every hour of the day some desire takes wing, but the doves return to their home, and my desires return not to my heart. The blue of heaven is white with their innumerable swarms, they flit through space from world to world, from sky to sky. Some love they seek to dwell with through the night: hasten, ah! hasten my love, lest thou find flown birds and a forsaken nest.' For passionate desire of what may be D'Albert cannot partake of his life as he finds it. 'In me is a mingled host of confused desires; others are born and the old desires devour them. My desires are a flock of birds that swarm and flit, but your love is an eagle with his eyes on the sun.' The emotion is the same, with all its apparent difference, as that of Clough:

Would I could wish my wishes all to rest
And know to wish the wish that were the best.

One more quotation will make the character of D'Albert more intelligible. 'Something attracts and calls him which is not of this

world, nor in this world; and, like the heliotrope in a cave, he strives to turn his eyes to that sun which he cannot see. His soul is one which has drunk too scant a draught of the water of Lethe before it was wedded to his body; and which keeps memories that trouble and torture it of that eternal beauty beheld in the heaven which is its home.' Thus D'Albert attempts to join himself to those

Children of the second birth
Whom this world could not tame.

But his heaven, it must be confessed, is rather that of Islam than of Plato; and if, like the philosopher of the 'Phædrus,' he seeks reminiscences of celestial beauty among the beautiful women of this world, it is only in this regard that his loves are Platonic. 'Mademoiselle de Maupin,' in fact, is the history of 'a glorious devil, large in heart and brain, that did love beauty only,' and reaped in *ennui* and discontent the reward of such love.

So far there have been two distinct periods in the development of M. Gautier's genius. In the first, as he himself says in a later poem, 'Pensée de Minuit,'

My poetry, a child in childlike grace,
With floating hair and boddice loose of lace,
With wild oats in her hand,
Brave in her necklace light of pearly dew,
Her robe that in the sun took shifting hue,
Went singing through the land.

To this early gaiety succeeded a time of sadness, of feverish search for pleasure, expressed in 'Mademoiselle de Maupin.' M. Gautier had not yet found his vocation. It was not till 1836 that Balzac sought him out, and employed him on the staff of 'La Chronique de Paris.' From that time his *métier* was fixed. He became a member of a most brilliant and interesting society, of which Balzac was the centre. Of this time of youth and mirth he delights to speak in the biographies of the artists whom he has known and survived. In this attachment to the Bohemia of letters, M. Gautier reminds one, as in some other respects, of Mr. Thackeray. The English Bohemia is staid and less picturesque: its Back Kitchen, with its songs and pipes, is colourless compared with the gatherings of critics, painters, actresses, who met to sup and smoke *haschisch*, in Lauzun's old Hôtel Pimodan. 'An honest Philistine would have been alarmed at the sight of those long-haired, bearded guests, brandishing daggers of the sixteenth century, Malay kreeses, Spanish navajas, and bending over dishes to which the flicker of swinging lamps gave a strange and suspicious appearance.' The Hôtel Pimodan, with its tapestries, secret stairs, old carvings, was the play-ground of Romanticism.

Novelists lived among the scenes which they described, enjoyed, and laughed at. Charles Baudelaire brought his paradoxes, Madame de

Girardin her gracious wit, Balzac his colossal extravagance. He persuaded himself that he had the power of divining the places where old treasures were buried, and organised an expedition, in which M. Gautier was to take part, in search of Spanish gold. The scheme failed for want of money, among other things, and Balzac had to content himself with describing impossible luxury in his novels.

The same taste, so conspicuous in Edgar Poe, shows itself in M. Gautier's tale of 'Fortunio.' 'Ouida,' with all her daring, has never painted scenes so splendid, or revelry so reckless; while the humour that mocks its own creation is worthy of Thackeray, and the irony has the very tone of the lighter wit of 'Vanity Fair.' If literary parallels were not as worthless as their historical brethren, it would not be difficult to show many points of resemblance between the English and the French novelist. Both originally attempted painting; both continued lovers and critics of art. Both have the same kind memories of the happy time of youth and smoke and song, and both retain a sadness not altogether dissimilar, though that of Thackeray is more openly displayed. Both, too, have been, if not in the strictest sense, scholars, men of wide reading in literature. Thackeray's love of the reign of Queen Anne has its counterpart in Gautier's study of that of Louis XIII.; and if Thackeray has reproduced in 'Esmond' the grave diction, the manners and style of the Augustan age, Gautier's 'Capitaine Fracasse' is a series of pictures in the style of the seventeenth century. These resemblances are curious, if not very essential, though M. Gautier's most ardent admirers could scarcely claim for him the supreme place of Thackeray.

The later history of M. Gautier is the uneventful story of a successful and accepted author. He has travelled in Spain, Italy, and Africa, bringing back graceful songs, and sketches of foreign manners and scenery. He was completely cured, by occupation, by change, by society and success, of the melancholy humours of René. So we are all 'well betrayed' into interest in the world, and forget the too wide survey and the old despair; learn to 'take short views,' and to partake of our life. M. Gautier has given scope to his natural gaiety, his intense appreciation of beauty of art and nature. Politics he considers an affair for 'National Guards;' he 'would willingly resign his civic rights as the price of seeing a pretty woman, or a picture by Raphael.'

Il est dans la nature, il est de belles choses,
Des rossignols oisifs, des paresseuses roses,
Des poètes rêveurs et des musiciens
Qui s'inquiètent peu d'être bons citoyens.

It is thus that he defends his right to live as the lilies of the field. Can people, who constantly find fault with M. Hugo and with Mr. Ruskin for busying themselves with politics and society, blame M. Gautier for his *insouciance*?

In strict accordance with his philosophy, the later poems of M. Gautier are more elaborate and less passionate than his earlier works. The songs he wrote in Spain have none of the ardour of De Musset's 'Andalouse and Juana.' Here is an attempt to translate :

LETRILLA.

Wherefore, child, so brave to-day,
Necklaces upon your breast,
Ribbons in your sandals gay,
A key of silver at your waist ?

Though the hills be white with snow,
Spring's eyes smile at eyes of ours,
And I seek the vale below,
Wonder if the jasmine flowers !

Spring or winter, for my part,
Flowers or buds, are one to me,
Such a grief is in my heart
Such pain keeps me company.

'Le Nuage,' 'Les Yeux bleus de la Montagne,' 'Dans la Sierra,' are all hymns to different orders of beauty or grandeur in Nature. 'Ribiera' is a criticism in verse, expressing the very spirit of the sombre painter of 'Mary in Egypt.' The 'Thébaïde' recognises the pale and ascetic refinement of the spiritual life. 'Barcarolle,' admirably imitated by Mr. Swinburne, yields to no song in modern French for music and pathetic gaiety. 'Pastel' renders within delicate conditions of limit the same sadness as breathes in Villon's 'Song of Dead Ladies.' It is not Flora and 'Echo beheld of no man,' that Gautier regrets, but the beauties of Boucher's date.

PASTEL.

I love you yet in your settings quaint,
Faces of ladies, lovely and dead ;
The flowers in your hands are faded and faint ;
'Tis a hundred years since their bloom was shed.

The wind of winter touching your cheek
Has made your roses and lilies die ;
But patches are never so far to seek
On the mouldy quays where your portraits lie.

The empire of beauty has passed away :
The Pompadour and the Parabère
Would find no lovers to rule to-day :
They sleep in the tomb, and Love's buried there.

But you, sweet faces that men forget,
You breathe at the flowers whose scent has fled,
And sadly you smile, who are smiling yet,
At the thought of your lovers so long time dead.

The 'Hymn to Sleep' is in a different key; it is as graceful in its Greek stateliness and quiet as Mr. Arnold's 'Strayed Reveller.' Pensiveness, moderation, refinement, are the notes of M. Gautier's more mature poems, and these especially characterise 'Les Émaux et Camées,' his latest collection of verses, published in 1852. In these he takes an emotion or a sentiment, of sadness or pleasure, of beauty, or of that mystic correspondence and interweaving of all nature, and exhibits the feeling in artistic form and completeness. 'Affinities secrètes' recalls, in its mystic melody, one of Mr. Rossetti's songs, 'I have been here before.'

Vous devant qui je brûle et tremble,
 Quel flot, quel frontier, quel rosier,
 Quel dôme nous connut ensemble,
 Perle ou marbre, fleur ou ramier ?

It is obvious that M. Gautier is, like his pupil Charles Baudelaire, 'a poet of the school of art.' He has no lyric cry; he does not lay his heart open to the world like De Musset, like Byron; he does not relieve his passion and his sadness in stormy gusts of song. To him the emotion is only the matter of the poem, and art the form; it is that his art may be perfect, may at once express pleasurable, and gracefully conceal the too naked truth of feeling, that he labours.

Comme un vase d'albâtre où l'on cache un flambeau,
 Mettez l'idée au fond de la forme sculptée,
 Et d'une lampe ardente éclairez le tombeau.

Poetry of this kind can never compete in popularity with the spontaneous utterance of passion. Its charm lacks in universality what it gains in refinement; perhaps we ought only to allow ourselves to enjoy its more intimate pleasures when we are sure of the knowledge of the grander art of universal genius, of Shakespeare and Homer. Such as it is, M. Gautier is a master of it; there is no shade of emotion or of beauty so delicate that he cannot express it in artistic form. Examples of this may notably be found in 'Contralto,' 'Tristesse en Mer,' 'Ce que disent les Hirondelles;' but the whole volume of 'Émaux et Camées' is a treasure-house of quiet pleasure.

We have scarcely left ourselves room to criticise M. Gautier's shorter tales. Both volumes are collections of fantasies, the 'nouvelles' of a more luxurious, passionate, and morbid, the 'Romans et Contes' of a more innocent, character. The latter indeed is the only one of M. Gautier's fictions of which it is *not* necessary to warn the mothers of families that it is not written '*pour les petites filles*.' It is as harmless as Erckmann-Chatrion's novels.

Since this essay was written an article has appeared in the 'Spectator,' asserting that the writings of M. Gautier 'prevent good people from sympathising with France.' The charge of the 'Spectator' is mainly based on 'Mademoiselle de Maupin.' We cannot agree with



FASHION FANCIES.—By Miss Sloper.

No. 1111. (The cover not intended to be set down in).

2019 100 Women's University Library 26

FIRST SET 100

18, Hogarth Road,
Bedford Park,
Chiswick: W.
30th Nov^r 1882.

Dear Sir:

I have perused with much interest your account of "The Origin of the Aesthetic Movement in England". Observing that the volume has reached the 2nd Edition perhaps it would not be out of place ~~to~~ - in case a third be published - to draw your attention to two errors which I notice have crept in the poem subtitled, "Ye Haunted House"; of which I am the author. Your printer has a peculiar view of the "spynytles" of "Ye Tabard Inn" if he is under the impression that they partake of a "fayerie" nature. In the original I wrote "fyerie" - very much more to the point indeed. In the second line, verse 2, "who lyrest there?" should read "who lyeth there?"

Wishing the volume every success,

I am,
Yours truly,

Raymond H. Phillimore 27
(Univ. coll.)

W. Hamilton Esq.

ÆSTHETIC CRITICISM.

To the Editor of THE MUSICAL REVIEW.

6/1/83.

SIR,—On Monday last, at the meeting of the Musical Association, a paper on “Musical Æsthetics” was read by Mr. E. J. Breakspeare, one division of which was styled “The Study in relation to Professional Criticism—Journalism.” In referring to this section of his subject, the lecturer remarked that a provincial critic in writing about a performance of Gounod’s Oratorio, *The Redemption*, gave more importance to his description of the devotional attention of the audience to the performance than to any critical remarks on the work itself. The lecturer also asked if persons were to attend performances of Oratorio as a religious exercise, or simply to indulge the pleasurable feelings caused by the performance of a musical work.

Mr. Breakspeare appeared to think that the matter should only be regarded from its æsthetic aspect, but surely when music is wedded to words the work at once acquires a double or compound aspect which cannot be got rid of. No composer can satisfactorily set to music a religious work without himself being, at least at the time, in a state of religious emotion, and consequently the work must in its complete form compel the religious and devotional attention of an audience.

When an audience is under the spell of a work of this character it follows, of course, that the critical faculty is, to a certain extent, lost; but this is really no loss, as the work would not have this power unless it were, as a whole, almost beyond the reach of criticism of any kind. I quite admit that there are but few works that have this power: of those by the older masters it would be difficult to name more than Bach’s *Passion Music*, Handel’s *Messiah*, Mozart’s *Requiem*, and Beethoven’s great *Mass in D*.

Music, when allied to words, whether of a sacred character or not, must, if written by a composer of talent, make a certain proportion of its impression on account of its text, and, therefore, music as music can only be judged from the purely æsthetic stand-point, when it is independent of voices and consequently of words.

Epigram from Maisie at least
is not I think in your Esthetic
Book. Perhaps you may like

A copy " Landay Aug 1872

Says Buchanan as to Browning with
envious look.

"Why such a singular name to you both
Says Browning to Maisland "Our critical sages
Can find their reviews from the first of my ways
Pepier the great Maisland with emphasis rough
"In your case O Poet," that's surely enough
So which responds Robert "I'm told the Reviewers
Disdain éen to look at the titles of yours.

There are two others as I same
Maisland & Memo

xxiii. 2. 1853

[Handwritten flourish]

ansd 29/1/83

ORLEANS CLUB

29, KING STREET,

ST. JAMES'S.

Dear Lili,

Your days since I
wrote to Lady Wilde
expressing my consciousness
of the debt I owed her
for lending me your
charming book to read:
Yesterday she sent me
the envelope ~~to~~ in
wh. this letter is
enclosed, suggesting that
I should thus repay it.

Tho' a stranger to you, I
cannot forbear doing this,
partly because I know
from experience how
pleasant it is to receive
such uncollected
encouragement such as
cannot be influenced
by ^{July 2} personal friendships;
& partly because I think
that juniors in the
literary world, like myself,

owe you a special
debt of gratitude for all
the information you
have unasked.

As to what I
myself think of Modern
Aesthetics, need not
be entered upon; I
agree with you that its
actual good, & the
prospective benefits to
wh. it leads are great.

With you^{also} I deplore that
space, & effeminate tone
wh. some (who have more
of the un-
tative
faculty than brains)
have raised amongst
the purer notes of
modern melody.

Hoping you will forgive
my pen's intrusion

Believe me

Yours faithfully

L. W. Gilbard Smith.

ART CRITICISM.

To the Editor of THE MUSICAL REVIEW.

SIR,—In the letter of "Cercavero," addressed to you last week, referring to my paper on "Musical Æsthetics," read to the Musical Association, there is a little misunderstanding as to my views on the subject of oratorio. The writer also employs the word "æsthetic" in a different sense to that in which I have understood it. In the sentence, "Mr. Breakspeare appeared to think that the matter should only be regarded from its æsthetic aspect," the writer makes me appear to adopt that narrow application of the term the erroneousness of which I endeavoured in my paper to make apparent. I include under Æsthetics all that pertains to a *philosophical* view of art—all that which is outside the bounds of purely scientific investigation, on the one hand (acoustics, physiology, &c.); or, on the other hand, not to be accounted strictly academical (such teaching concerning only the grammatical arrangement, &c., of the musical "material"—notes, chords, themes)—so that a study professedly æsthetic *must* embrace in its just evolution the poetic element in any word-and-tone combination, whether belonging to the oratorio or any other class of musical art. "Cercavero" quite misrepresents me in implying that I make a distinction of the simple musical elements of the work as forming its "æsthetic" side. I fancied I had sufficiently guarded against this interpretation of the word; but the restricted application of the term has so generally obtained (unless, indeed, where it is employed so vaguely as to be without much application at all) that I can hardly complain if the meaning I would have attached to it is not so well established as I would wish. I should be among the last to think of criticising a musical work irrespective of the accompanying words or libretto. I may refer "Cercavero" (whom, perhaps, I may rightly presume to be a member of the Musical Association) to a former paper of mine on "Songs and Song-Writers" for a declaration of my opinion on this point. Not only may "music as music" be judged from "the purely æsthetic standpoint," but the relationship of the poetic to the musical element is, with a work of this character, the proper concernment of æsthetics.

I am, Sir,

Yours obediently,

EUSTACE J. BREAKSPEARE.

Summer-road, Birmingham,

January 9, 1883.

[Limits of space prevent us from printing the remainder of Mr. Breakspeare's letter—*Ed*, M.R.]

CURRENT COMMENT & CRITICISM.

[BY "FLYCATHER."]

A Disgraceful Report.

If we are to judge by bare results the new blood that was introduced to the board of Tubes, Limited, over a year ago, is no improvement on the old. It will be recollected that the board was almost entirely re-constituted. Several distinguished gentlemen, of whom the brother of the Colonial Secretary was the bright particular star, were induced to accept seats on the board. There can be little doubt that the shareholders viewed Mr. Chamberlain's adhesion to the board as a harbinger of brighter prospects for the company, particularly as that gentleman invested largely in the company's shares as an earnest of the faith that was in him. The report issued last week must have created keen disappointment amongst the shareholders, for it reveals the appalling loss of £52,022. It must be confessed that the administration which contrives to lose at the rate of £1,000 per week for twelve months has earned a most unenviable title to distinction. The very lengthy explanation contained in the report, which is the essence of candour, indicates that the directors are fully alive to the gravity of their position, but they do not intend to be saddled with more than their due share of the responsibility. To put it briefly, but plainly, they account for the loss as a legacy left them by their predecessors. £10,000 has gone in additional depreciation of stock, £5,000 loss on the tubes that had been delivered by their predecessors and since returned and consigned to the scrap heat—what a heap it must be!—and £2,500 to extra depreciation on plant at St. Helens to provide for the closing of these works. It appears the St. Helens works have been closed since February last. The remainder of the loss—£34,500—the directors acknowledge has resulted from the past year's trading, but even this is attributed to their predecessors. The extraordinary confession is made that during the whole year, the company has been selling below cost price! The great majority of the orders, we are told, were booked before the present directors accepted office. Here then is the result of the strenuous efforts that were made to get the company's name on the Admiralty list. Either the Admiralty is a most undesirable customer or the previous administration was guilty of gross recklessness of the shareholders' interest. There have been many "busy fools" in the cycle trade, but upon its own showing Tubes, Limited, is entitled to pre-eminence. We heard from time to time of the works being in full swing night and day. We now find they were busy squandering the shareholders money. The present report is a damning impeachment of the previous administration, and it will not be unnatural if the shareholders cast their eyes in this direction for some kind of refutation, explanation, or compensation, for the ruinous results for which they are to blame.

The Directors' Proposals.

Apparently the experience of the past year has taught the directors caution, so far as expressing optimistic views as to the future of the tube trade are concerned. They are, however, satisfied that there are sufficient assets to fully protect the interests of the debenture

ack-Pedal Brake. A grand combination.