CHAPTER I - THE VICTORIAN COMPROMISE AND ITS ENEMIES

The previous literary life of this country had left vigorous many old forces in the Victorian time, as in our time. Roman Britain and Mediæval England are still not only alive but lively; for real development is not leaving things behind, as on a road, but drawing life from them, as from a root. Even when we improve we never progress. For progress, the metaphor from the road, implies a man leaving his home behind him: but improvement means a man exalting the towers or extending the gardens of his home. The ancient English literature was like all the several literatures of Christendom, alike in its likeness, alike in its very unlikeness. Like all European cultures, it was European; like all European cultures, it was something more than European. A most marked and unmanageable national temperament is plain in Chaucer and the ballads of Robin Hood; in spite of deep and sometimes disastrous changes of national policy, that note is still unmistakable in Shakespeare, in Johnson and his friends, in Cobbett, in Dickens. It is vain to dream of defining such vivid things; a national soul is as indefinable as a smell, and as unmistakable. I remember a friend who tried impatiently to explain the word "mistletoe" to a German, and cried at last, despairing, "Well, you know holly--mistletoe's the opposite!" I do not commend this logical method in the comparison of plants or nations. But if he had said to the Teuton, "Well, you know Germany--England's the opposite"--the definition, though fallacious, would not have been wholly false. England, like all Christian countries, absorbed valuable elements from the forests and the rude romanticism of the North; but, like all Christian countries, it drank its longest literary draughts from the classic fountains of the ancients: nor was this (as is so often loosely thought) a matter of the mere "Renaissance." The English tongue and talent of speech did not merely flower suddenly into the gargantuan polysyllables of the great Elizabethans; it had always been full of the popular Latin of the Middle Ages. But whatever balance of blood and racial idiom one allows, it is really true that the only suggestion that gets near the Englishman is to hint how far he is from the German. The Germans, like the Welsh, can sing perfectly serious songs perfectly seriously in chorus: can with clear eyes and clear voices join together in words of innocent and beautiful personal passion, for a false maiden or a dead child. The nearest one can get to defining the poetic temper of Englishmen is to say that they couldn't do this even for beer. They can sing in chorus, and louder than other Christians: but they must have in their songs something, I know not what, that is at once shamefaced and rowdy. If the matter be emotional, it must somehow be also broad, common and comic, as "Wapping Old Stairs" and "Sally in Our Alley." If it be

patriotic, it must somehow be openly bombastic and, as it were, indefensible, like "Rule Britannia" or like that superb song (I never knew its name, if it has one) that records the number of leagues from Ushant to the Scilly Isles. Also there is a tender love-lyric called "O Tarry Trousers" which is even more English than the heart of The Midsummer Night's Dream. But our greatest bards and sages have often shown a tendency to rant it and roar it like true British sailors; to employ an extravagance that is half conscious and therefore half humorous. Compare, for example, the rants of Shakespeare with the rants of Victor Hugo. A piece of Hugo's eloquence is either a serious triumph or a serious collapse: one feels the poet is offended at a smile. But Shakespeare seems rather proud of talking nonsense: I never can read that rousing and mounting description of the storm, where it comes to--

"Who take the ruffian billows by the top, Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them With deafening clamour in the slippery clouds."

without seeing an immense balloon rising from the ground, with Shakespeare grinning over the edge of the car, and saying, "You can't stop me: I am above reason now." That is the nearest we can get to the general national spirit, which we have now to follow through one brief and curious but very national episode.

Three years before the young queen was crowned, William Cobbett was buried at Farnham. It may seem strange to begin with this great neglected name, rather than the old age of Wordsworth or the young death of Shelley. But to any one who feels literature as human, the empty chair of Cobbett is more solemn and significant than the throne. With him died the sort of democracy that was a return to Nature, and which only poets and mobs can understand. After him Radicalism is urban--and Toryism suburban. Going through green Warwickshire, Cobbett might have thought of the crops and Shelley of the clouds. But Shelley would have called Birmingham what Cobbett called it--a hell-hole. Cobbett was one with after Liberals in the ideal of Man under an equal law, a citizen of no mean city. He differed from after Liberals in strongly affirming that Liverpool and Leeds are mean cities.

It is no idle Hibernianism to say that towards the end of the eighteenth century the most important event in English history happened in France. It would seem still more perverse, yet it would be still more precise, to say that the most important event in English history was the event that never happened at all--the English Revolution on the lines of the French Revolution. Its failure was not due to any lack of fervour or even ferocity in those who would have brought it about: from the time when the first shout

went up for Wilkes to the time when the last Luddite fires were quenched in a cold rain of rationalism, the spirit of Cobbett, of rural republicanism, of English and patriotic democracy, burned like a beacon. The revolution failed because it was foiled by another revolution; an aristocratic revolution, a victory of the rich over the poor. It was about this time that the common lands were finally enclosed; that the more cruel game laws were first established; that England became finally a land of landlords instead of common land-owners. I will not call it a Tory reaction; for much of the worst of it (especially of the land-grabbing) was done by Whigs; but we may certainly call it Anti-Jacobin. Now this fact, though political, is not only relevant but essential to everything that concerned literature. The upshot was that though England was full of the revolutionary ideas, nevertheless there was no revolution. And the effect of this in turn was that from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth the spirit of revolt in England took a wholly literary form. In France it was what people did that was wild and elemental; in England it was what people wrote. It is a quaint comment on the notion that the English are practical and the French merely visionary, that we were rebels in arts while they were rebels in arms.

It has been well and wittily said (as illustrating the mildness of English and the violence of French developments) that the same Gospel of Rousseau which in France produced the Terror, in England produced Sandford and Merton. But people forget that in literature the English were by no means restrained by Mr. Barlow; and that if we turn from politics to art, we shall find the two parts peculiarly reversed. It would be equally true to say that the same eighteenth-century emancipation which in France produced the pictures of David, in England produced the pictures of Blake. There never were, I think, men who gave to the imagination so much of the sense of having broken out into the very borderlands of being, as did the great English poets of the romantic or revolutionary period; than Coleridge in the secret sunlight of the Antarctic, where the waters were like witches' oils; than Keats looking out of those extreme mysterious casements upon that ultimate sea. The heroes and criminals of the great French crisis would have been quite as incapable of such imaginative independence as Keats and Coleridge would have been incapable of winning the battle of Wattignies. In Paris the tree of liberty was a garden tree, clipped very correctly; and Robespierre used the razor more regularly than the guillotine. Danton, who knew and admired English literature, would have cursed freely over Kubla Khan; and if the Committee of Public Safety had not already executed Shelley as an aristocrat, they would certainly have locked him up for a madman. Even Hébert (the one really vile Revolutionist), had he been reproached by English poets with worshipping the Goddess of Reason, might legitimately have retorted that it was rather the Goddess of Unreason that

they set up to be worshipped. Verbally considered, Carlyle's French Revolution was more revolutionary than the real French Revolution: and if Carrier, in an exaggerative phrase, empurpled the Loire with carnage, Turner almost literally set the Thames on fire.

This trend of the English Romantics to carry out the revolutionary idea not savagely in works, but very wildly indeed in words, had several results; the most important of which was this. It started English literature after the Revolution with a sort of bent towards independence and eccentricity, which in the brighter wits became individuality, and in the duller ones, Individualism. English Romantics, English Liberals, were not public men making a republic, but poets, each seeing a vision. The lonelier version of liberty was a sort of aristocratic anarchism in Byron and Shelley; but though in Victorian times it faded into much milder prejudices and much more bourgeois crotchets, England retained from that twist a certain odd separation and privacy. England became much more of an island than she had ever been before. There fell from her about this time, not only the understanding of France or Germany, but to her own long and yet lingering disaster, the understanding of Ireland. She had not joined in the attempt to create European democracy; nor did she, save in the first glow of Waterloo, join in the counter-attempt to destroy it. The life in her literature was still, to a large extent, the romantic liberalism of Rousseau, the free and humane truisms that had refreshed the other nations, the return to Nature and to natural rights. But that which in Rousseau was a creed, became in Hazlitt a taste and in Lamb little more than a whim. These latter and their like form a group at the beginning of the nineteenth century of those we may call the Eccentrics: they gather round Coleridge and his decaying dreams or linger in the tracks of Keats and Shelley and Godwin; Lamb with his bibliomania and creed of pure caprice, the most unique of all geniuses; Leigh Hunt with his Bohemian impecuniosity; Landor with his tempestuous temper, throwing plates on the floor; Hazlitt with his bitterness and his low love affair; even that healthier and happier Bohemian, Peacock. With these, in one sense at least, goes De Quincey. He was, unlike most of these embers of the revolutionary age in letters, a Tory; and was attached to the political army which is best represented in letters by the virile laughter and leisure of Wilson's Noctes Ambrosianæ. But he had nothing in common with that environment. It remained for some time as a Tory tradition, which balanced the cold and brilliant aristocracy of the Whigs. It lived on the legend of Trafalgar; the sense that insularity was independence; the sense that anomalies are as jolly as family jokes; the general sense that old salts are the salt of the earth. It still lives in some old songs about Nelson or Waterloo, which are vastly more pompous and vastly more sincere than the cockney cocksureness of later Jingo lyrics. But it is hard to connect De

Quincey with it; or, indeed, with anything else. De Quincey would certainly have been a happier man, and almost certainly a better man, if he had got drunk on toddy with Wilson, instead of getting calm and clear (as he himself describes) on opium, and with no company but a book of German metaphysics. But he would hardly have revealed those wonderful vistas and perspectives of prose, which permit one to call him the first and most powerful of the decadents: those sentences that lengthen out like nightmare corridors, or rise higher and higher like impossible eastern pagodas. He was a morbid fellow, and far less moral than Burns; for when Burns confessed excess he did not defend it. But he has cast a gigantic shadow on our literature, and was as certainly a genius as Poe. Also he had humour, which Poe had not. And if any one still smarting from the pinpricks of Wilde or Whistler, wants to convict them of plagiarism in their "art for art" epigrams--he will find most of what they said said better in Murder as One of the Fine Arts.

One great man remains of this elder group, who did their last work only under Victoria; he knew most of the members of it, yet he did not belong to it in any corporate sense. He was a poor man and an invalid, with Scotch blood and a strong, though perhaps only inherited, quarrel with the old Calvinism; by name Thomas Hood. Poverty and illness forced him to the toils of an incessant jester; and the revolt against gloomy religion made him turn his wit, whenever he could, in the direction of a defence of happier and humaner views. In the long great roll that includes Homer and Shakespeare, he was the last great man who really employed the pun. His puns were not all good (nor were Shakespeare's), but the best of them were a strong and fresh form of art. The pun is said to be a thing of two meanings; but with Hood there were three meanings, for there was also the abstract truth that would have been there with no pun at all. The pun of Hood is underrated, like the "wit" of Voltaire, by those who forget that the words of Voltaire were not pins, but swords. In Hood at his best the verbal neatness only gives to the satire or the scorn a ring of finality such as is given by rhyme. For rhyme does go with reason, since the aim of both is to bring things to an end. The tragic necessity of puns tautened and hardened Hood's genius; so that there is always a sort of shadow of that sharpness across all his serious poems, falling like the shadow of a sword. "Sewing at once with a double thread a shroud as well as a shirt"--"We thought her dying when she slept, and sleeping when she died"--"Oh God, that bread should be so dear and flesh and blood so cheap"--none can fail to note in these a certain fighting discipline of phrase, a compactness and point which was well trained in lines like "A cannon-ball took off his legs, so he laid down his arms." In France he would have been a great epigrammatist, like Hugo. In England he is a punster.

There was nothing at least in this group I have loosely called the Eccentrics that disturbs the general sense that all their generation was part of the sunset of the great revolutionary poets. This fading glamour affected England in a sentimental and, to some extent, a snobbish direction; making men feel that great lords with long curls and whiskers were naturally the wits that led the world. But it affected England also negatively and by reaction; for it associated such men as Byron with superiority, but not with success. The English middle classes were led to distrust poetry almost as much as they admired it. They could not believe that either vision at the one end or violence at the other could ever be practical. They were deaf to that great warning of Hugo: "You say the poet is in the clouds; but so is the thunderbolt." Ideals exhausted themselves in the void; Victorian England, very unwisely, would have no more to do with idealists in politics. And this, chiefly, because there had been about these great poets a young and splendid sterility; since the pantheist Shelley was in fact washed under by the wave of the world, or Byron sank in death as he drew the sword for Hellas.

The chief turn of nineteenth-century England was taken about the time when a footman at Holland House opened a door and announced "Mr. Macaulay." Macaulay's literary popularity was representative and it was deserved; but his presence among the great Whig families marks an epoch. He was the son of one of the first "friends of the negro," whose honest industry and philanthropy were darkened by a religion of sombre smugness, which almost makes one fancy they loved the negro for his colour, and would have turned away from red or yellow men as needlessly gaudy. But his wit and his politics (combined with that dropping of the Puritan tenets but retention of the Puritan tone which marked his class and generation), lifted him into a sphere which was utterly opposite to that from which he came. This Whig world was exclusive; but it was not narrow. It was very difficult for an outsider to get into it; but if he did get into it he was in a much freer atmosphere than any other in England. Of those aristocrats, the Old Guard of the eighteenth century, many denied God, many defended Bonaparte, and nearly all sneered at the Royal Family. Nor did wealth or birth make any barriers for those once within this singular Whig world. The platform was high, but it was level. Moreover the upstart nowadays pushes himself by wealth: but the Whigs could choose their upstarts. In that world Macaulay found Rogers, with his phosphorescent and corpse-like brilliancy; there he found Sydney Smith, bursting with crackers of common sense, an admirable old heathen; there he found Tom Moore, the romantic of the Regency, a shortened shadow of Lord Byron. That he reached this platform and remained on it is, I say, typical of a turning-point in the century. For

the fundamental fact of early Victorian history was this: the decision of the middle classes to employ their new wealth in backing up a sort of aristocratical compromise, and not (like the middle class in the French Revolution) insisting on a clean sweep and a clear democratic programme. It went along with the decision of the aristocracy to recruit itself more freely from the middle class. It was then also that Victorian "prudery" began: the great lords yielded on this as on Free Trade. These two decisions have made the doubtful England of to-day; and Macaulay is typical of them; he is the bourgeois in Belgravia. The alliance is marked by his great speeches for Lord Grey's Reform Bill: it is marked even more significantly in his speech against the Chartists. Cobbett was dead.

Macaulay makes the foundation of the Victorian age in all its very English and unique elements: its praise of Puritan politics and abandonment of Puritan theology; its belief in a cautious but perpetual patching up of the Constitution; its admiration for industrial wealth. But above all he typifies the two things that really make the Victorian Age itself, the cheapness and narrowness of its conscious formulæ; the richness and humanity of its unconscious tradition. There were two Macaulays, a rational Macaulay who was generally wrong, and a romantic Macaulay who was almost invariably right. All that was small in him derives from the dull parliamentarism of men like Sir James Mackintosh; but all that was great in him has much more kinship with the festive antiquarianism of Sir Walter Scott.

As a philosopher he had only two thoughts; and neither of them is true. The first was that politics, as an experimental science, must go on improving, along with clocks, pistols or penknives, by the mere accumulation of experiment and variety. He was, indeed, far too strong-minded a man to accept the hazy modern notion that the soul in its highest sense can change: he seems to have held that religion can never get any better and that poetry rather tends to get worse. But he did not see the flaw in his political theory; which is that unless the soul improves with time there is no guarantee that the accumulations of experience will be adequately used. Figures do not add themselves up; birds do not label or stuff themselves; comets do not calculate their own courses; these things are done by the soul of man. And if the soul of man is subject to other laws, is liable to sin, to sleep, to anarchism or to suicide, then all sciences including politics may fall as sterile and lie as fallow as before man's reason was made. Macaulay seemed sometimes to talk as if clocks produced clocks, or guns had families of little pistols, or a penknife littered like a pig. The other view he held was the more or less utilitarian theory of toleration; that we should get the best butcher whether he was a Baptist or a Muggletonian, and the best soldier whether he was a Wesleyan or an Irvingite. The compromise worked well

enough in an England Protestant in bulk; but Macaulay ought to have seen that it has its limitations. A good butcher might be a Baptist; he is not very likely to be a Buddhist. A good soldier might be a Wesleyan; he would hardly be a Quaker. For the rest, Macaulay was concerned to interpret the seventeenth century in terms of the triumph of the Whigs as champions of public rights; and he upheld this one-sidedly but not malignantly in a style of rounded and ringing sentences, which at its best is like steel and at its worst like tin.

This was the small conscious Macaulay; the great unconscious Macaulay was very different. His noble enduring quality in our literature is this: that he truly had an abstract passion for history; a warm, poetic and sincere enthusiasm for great things as such; an ardour and appetite for great books, great battles, great cities, great men. He felt and used names like trumpets. The reader's greatest joy is in the writer's own joy, when he can let his last phrase fall like a hammer on some resounding name like Hildebrand or Charlemagne, on the eagles of Rome or the pillars of Hercules. As with Walter Scott, some of the best things in his prose and poetry are the surnames that he did not make. And it is remarkable to notice that this romance of history, so far from making him more partial or untrustworthy, was the only thing that made him moderately just. His reason was entirely one-sided and fanatical. It was his imagination that was well-balanced and broad. He was monotonously certain that only Whigs were right; but it was necessary that Tories should at least be great, that his heroes might have foemen worthy of their steel. If there was one thing in the world he hated it was a High Church Royalist parson; yet when Jeremy Collier the Jacobite priest raises a real banner, all Macaulay's blood warms with the mere prospect of a fight. "It is inspiriting to see how gallantly the solitary outlaw advances to attack enemies formidable separately, and, it might have been thought, irresistible when combined; distributes his swashing blows right and left among Wycherley, Congreve and Vanbrugh, treads the wretched D'Urfey down in the dirt beneath his feet; and strikes with all his strength full at the towering crest of Dryden." That is exactly where Macaulay is great; because he is almost Homeric. The whole triumph turns upon mere names; but men are commanded by names. So his poem on the Armada is really a good geography book gone mad; one sees the map of England come alive and march and mix under the eye.

The chief tragedy in the trend of later literature may be expressed by saying that the smaller Macaulay conquered the larger. Later men had less and less of that hot love of history he had inherited from Scott. They had more and more of that cold science of self-interests which he had learnt from Bentham.

The name of this great man, though it belongs to a period before the Victorian, is, like the name of Cobbett, very important to it. In substance Macaulay accepted the conclusions of Bentham; though he offered brilliant objections to all his arguments. In any case the soul of Bentham (if he had one) went marching on, like John Brown; and in the central Victorian movement it was certainly he who won. John Stuart Mill was the final flower of that growth. He was himself fresh and delicate and pure; but that is the business of a flower. Though he had to preach a hard rationalism in religion, a hard competition in economics, a hard egoism in ethics, his own soul had all that silvery sensitiveness that can be seen in his fine portrait by Watts. He boasted none of that brutal optimism with which his friends and followers of the Manchester School expounded their cheery negations. There was about Mill even a sort of embarrassment; he exhibited all the wheels of his iron universe rather reluctantly, like a gentleman in trade showing ladies over his factory. There shone in him a beautiful reverence for women, which is all the more touching because, in his department, as it were, he could only offer them so dry a gift as the Victorian Parliamentary Franchise.

Now in trying to describe how the Victorian writers stood to each other, we must recur to the very real difficulty noted at the beginning: the difficulty of keeping the moral order parallel with the chronological order. For the mind moves by instincts, associations, premonitions and not by fixed dates or completed processes. Action and reaction will occur simultaneously: or the cause actually be found after the effect. Errors will be resisted before they have been properly promulgated: notions will be first defined long after they are dead. It is no good getting the almanac to look up moonshine; and most literature in this sense is moonshine. Thus Wordsworth shrank back into Toryism, as it were, from a Shelleyan extreme of pantheism as yet disembodied. Thus Newman took down the iron sword of dogma to parry a blow not yet delivered, that was coming from the club of Darwin. For this reason no one can understand tradition, or even history, who has not some tenderness for anachronism.

Now for the great part of the Victorian era the utilitarian tradition which reached its highest in Mill held the centre of the field; it was the philosophy in office, so to speak. It sustained its march of codification and inquiry until it had made possible the great victories of Darwin and Huxley and Wallace. If we take Macaulay at the beginning of the epoch and Huxley at the end of it, we shall find that they had much in common. They were both square-jawed, simple men, greedy of controversy but scornful of sophistry, dead to mysticism but very much alive to morality; and they were both very much more under the influence of their own admirable rhetoric than they knew.

Huxley, especially, was much more a literary than a scientific man. It is amusing to note that when Huxley was charged with being rhetorical, he expressed his horror of "plastering the fair face of truth with that pestilent cosmetic, rhetoric," which is itself about as well-plastered a piece of rhetoric as Ruskin himself could have managed. The difference that the period had developed can best be seen if we consider this: that while neither was of a spiritual sort, Macaulay took it for granted that common sense required some kind of theology, while Huxley took it for granted that common sense meant having none. Macaulay, it is said, never talked about his religion: but Huxley was always talking about the religion he hadn't got.

But though this simple Victorian rationalism held the centre, and in a certain sense was the Victorian era, it was assailed on many sides, and had been assailed even before the beginning of that era. The rest of the intellectual history of the time is a series of reactions against it, which come wave after wave. They have succeeded in shaking it, but not in dislodging it from the modern mind. The first of these was the Oxford Movement; a bow that broke when it had let loose the flashing arrow that was Newman. The second reaction was one man; without teachers or pupils--Dickens. The third reaction was a group that tried to create a sort of new romantic Protestantism, to pit against both Reason and Rome--Carlyle, Ruskin, Kingsley, Maurice--perhaps Tennyson. Browning also was at once romantic and Puritan; but he belonged to no group, and worked against materialism in a manner entirely his own. Though as a boy he bought eagerly Shelley's revolutionary poems, he did not think of becoming a revolutionary poet. He concentrated on the special souls of men; seeking God in a series of private interviews. Hence Browning, great as he is, is rather one of the Victorian novelists than wholly of the Victorian poets. From Ruskin, again, descend those who may be called the Pre-Raphaelites of prose and poetry.

It is really with this rationalism triumphant, and with the romance of these various attacks on it, that the study of Victorian literature begins and proceeds. Bentham was already the prophet of a powerful sect; Macaulay was already the historian of an historic party, before the true Victorian epoch began. The middle classes were emerging in a state of damaged Puritanism. The upper classes were utterly pagan. Their clear and courageous testimony remains in those immortal words of Lord Melbourne, who had led the young queen to the throne and long stood there as her protector. "No one has more respect for the Christian religion than I have; but really, when it comes to intruding it into private life----" What was pure paganism in the politics of Melbourne became a sort of mystical cynicism in the politics of Disraeli; and is well mirrored in his novels--for he was a man who felt at home in mirrors. With every allowance for aliens and eccentrics

and all the accidents that must always eat the edges of any systematic circumference, it may still be said that the Utilitarians held the fort.

Of the Oxford Movement what remains most strongly in the Victorian Epoch centres round the challenge of Newman, its one great literary man. But the movement as a whole had been of great significance in the very genesis and make up of the society: yet that significance is not quite easy immediately to define. It was certainly not æsthetic ritualism; scarcely one of the Oxford High Churchmen was what we should call a Ritualist. It was certainly not a conscious reaching out towards Rome: except on a Roman Catholic theory which might explain all our unrests by that dim desire. It knew little of Europe, it knew nothing of Ireland, to which any merely Roman Catholic revulsion would obviously have turned. In the first instance, I think, the more it is studied, the more it would appear that it was a movement of mere religion as such. It was not so much a taste for Catholic dogma, but simply a hunger for dogma. For dogma means the serious satisfaction of the mind. Dogma does not mean the absence of thought, but the end of thought. It was a revolt against the Victorian spirit in one particular aspect of it; which may roughly be called (in a cosy and domestic Victorian metaphor) having your cake and eating it too. It saw that the solid and serious Victorians were fundamentally frivolous--because they were fundamentally inconsistent.

A man making the confession of any creed worth ten minutes' intelligent talk, is always a man who gains something and gives up something. So long as he does both he can create: for he is making an outline and a shape. Mahomet created, when he forbade wine but allowed five wives: he created a very big thing, which we have still to deal with. The first French Republic created, when it affirmed property and abolished peerages; France still stands like a square, four-sided building which Europe has besieged in vain. The men of the Oxford Movement would have been horrified at being compared either with Moslems or Jacobins. But their sub-conscious thirst was for something that Moslems and Jacobins had and ordinary Anglicans had not: the exalted excitement of consistency. If you were a Moslem you were not a Bacchanal. If you were a Republican you were not a peer. And so the Oxford men, even in their first and dimmest stages, felt that if you were a Churchman you were not a Dissenter. The Oxford Movement was, out of the very roots of its being, a rational movement; almost a rationalist movement. In that it differed sharply from the other reactions that shook the Utilitarian compromise; the blinding mysticism of Carlyle, the mere manly emotionalism of Dickens. It was an appeal to reason: reason said that if a Christian had a feast day he must have a fast day too. Otherwise, all days ought to be alike; and this was that very Utilitarianism against which their Oxford Movement was the first and most rational assault.

This idea, even by reason of its reason, narrowed into a sort of sharp spear, of which the spear blade was Newman. It did forget many of the other forces that were fighting on its side. But the movement could boast, first and last, many men who had this eager dogmatic quality: Keble, who spoilt a poem in order to recognise a doctrine; Faber, who told the rich, almost with taunts, that God sent the poor as eagles to strip them; Froude, who with Newman announced his return in the arrogant motto of Achilles. But the greater part of all this happened before what is properly our period; and in that period Newman, and perhaps Newman alone, is the expression and summary of the whole school. It was certainly in the Victorian Age, and after his passage to Rome, that Newman claimed his complete right to be in any book on modern English literature. This is no place for estimating his theology: but one point about it does clearly emerge. Whatever else is right, the theory that Newman went over to Rome to find peace and an end of argument, is quite unquestionably wrong. He had far more quarrels after he had gone over to Rome. But, though he had far more quarrels, he had far fewer compromises: and he was of that temper which is tortured more by compromise than by quarrel. He was a man at once of abnormal energy and abnormal sensibility: nobody without that combination could have written the Apologia. If he sometimes seemed to skin his enemies alive, it was because he himself lacked a skin. In this sense his Apologia is a triumph far beyond the ephemeral charge on which it was founded; in this sense he does indeed (to use his own expression) vanquish not his accuser but his judges. Many men would shrink from recording all their cold fits and hesitations and prolonged inconsistencies: I am sure it was the breath of life to Newman to confess them, now that he had done with them for ever. His Lectures on the Present Position of English Catholics, practically preached against a raging mob, rise not only higher but happier, as his instant unpopularity increases. There is something grander than humour, there is fun, in the very first lecture about the British Constitution as explained to a meeting of Russians. But always his triumphs are the triumphs of a highly sensitive man: a man must feel insults before he can so insultingly and splendidly avenge them. He is a naked man, who carries a naked sword. The quality of his literary style is so successful that it succeeds in escaping definition. The quality of his logic is that of a long but passionate patience, which waits until he has fixed all corners of an iron trap. But the quality of his moral comment on the age remains what I have said: a protest of the rationality of religion as against the increasing irrationality of mere Victorian comfort and compromise. So far as the present purpose is concerned, his protest died with him: he left few imitators and (it may easily be conceived) no successful imitators. The suggestion of him lingers on in the exquisite Elizabethan perversity of Coventry Patmore; and has later flamed out from the shy volcano of Francis

Thompson. Otherwise (as we shall see in the parallel case of Ruskin's Socialism) he has no followers in his own age: but very many in ours.

The next group of reactionaries or romantics or whatever we elect to call them, gathers roughly around one great name. Scotland, from which had come so many of those harsh economists who made the first Radical philosophies of the Victorian Age, was destined also to fling forth (I had almost said to spit forth) their fiercest and most extraordinary enemy. The two primary things in Thomas Carlyle were his early Scotch education and his later German culture. The first was in almost all respects his strength; the latter in some respects his weakness. As an ordinary lowland peasant, he inherited the really valuable historic property of the Scots, their independence, their fighting spirit, and their instinctive philosophic consideration of men merely as men. But he was not an ordinary peasant. If he had laboured obscurely in his village till death, he would have been yet locally a marked man; a man with a wild eye, a man with an air of silent anger; perhaps a man at whom stones were sometimes thrown. A strain of disease and suffering ran athwart both his body and his soul. In spite of his praise of silence, it was only through his gift of utterance that he escaped madness. But while his fellow-peasants would have seen this in him and perhaps mocked it, they would also have seen something which they always expect in such men, and they would have got it: vision, a power in the mind akin to second sight. Like many ungainly or otherwise unattractive Scotchmen, he was a seer. By which I do not mean to refer so much to his transcendental rhapsodies about the World-soul or the Nature-garment or the Mysteries and Eternities generally, these seem to me to belong more to his German side and to be less sincere and vital. I mean a real power of seeing things suddenly, not apparently reached by any process; a grand power of guessing. He saw the crowd of the new States General, Danton with his "rude flattened face," Robespierre peering mistily through his spectacles. He saw the English charge at Dunbar. He guessed that Mirabeau, however dissipated and diseased, had something sturdy inside him. He guessed that Lafayette, however brave and victorious, had nothing inside him. He supported the lawlessness of Cromwell, because across two centuries he almost physically felt the feebleness and hopelessness of the moderate Parliamentarians. He said a word of sympathy for the universally vituperated Jacobins of the Mountain, because through thick veils of national prejudice and misrepresentation, he felt the impossibility of the Gironde. He was wrong in denying to Scott the power of being inside his characters: but he really had a good deal of that power himself. It was one of his innumerable and rather provincial crotchets to encourage prose as against poetry. But, as a matter of fact, he himself was much greater considered as a kind of poet than considered as anything else; and the

central idea of poetry is the idea of guessing right, like a child.

He first emerged, as it were, as a student and disciple of Goethe. The connection was not wholly fortunate. With much of what Goethe really stood for he was not really in sympathy; but in his own obstinate way, he tried to knock his idol into shape instead of choosing another. He pushed further and further the extravagances of a vivid but very unbalanced and barbaric style, in the praise of a poet who really represented the calmest classicism and the attempt to restore a Hellenic equilibrium in the mind. It is like watching a shaggy Scandinavian decorating a Greek statue washed up by chance on his shores. And while the strength of Goethe was a strength of completion and serenity, which Carlyle not only never found but never even sought, the weaknesses of Goethe were of a sort that did not draw the best out of Carlyle. The one civilised element that the German classicists forgot to put into their beautiful balance was a sense of humour. And great poet as Goethe was, there is to the last something faintly fatuous about his half sceptical, half sentimental self-importance; a Lord Chamberlain of teacup politics; an earnest and elderly flirt; a German of the Germans. Now Carlyle had humour; he had it in his very style, but it never got into his philosophy. His philosophy largely remained a heavy Teutonic idealism, absurdly unaware of the complexity of things; as when he perpetually repeated (as with a kind of flat-footed stamping) that people ought to tell the truth; apparently supposing, to quote Stevenson's phrase, that telling the truth is as easy as blind hookey. Yet, though his general honesty is unquestionable, he was by no means one of those who will give up a fancy under the shock of a fact. If by sheer genius he frequently guessed right, he was not the kind of man to admit easily that he had guessed wrong. His version of Cromwell's filthy cruelties in Ireland, or his impatient slurring over of the most sinister riddle in the morality of Frederick the Great--these passages are, one must frankly say, disingenuous. But it is, so to speak, a generous disingenuousness; the heat and momentum of sincere admirations, not the shuffling fear and flattery of the constitutional or patriotic historian. It bears most resemblance to the incurable prejudices of a woman.

For the rest there hovered behind all this transcendental haze a certain presence of old northern paganism; he really had some sympathy with the vast vague gods of that moody but not unmanly Nature-worship which seems to have filled the darkness of the North before the coming of the Roman Eagle or the Christian Cross. This he combined, allowing for certain sceptical omissions, with the grisly Old Testament God he had heard about in the black Sabbaths of his childhood; and so promulgated (against both Rationalists and Catholics) a sort of heathen Puritanism: Protestantism purged of its evidences of Christianity.

His great and real work was the attack on Utilitarianism: which did real good, though there was much that was muddled and dangerous in the historical philosophy which he preached as an alternative. It is his real glory that he was the first to see clearly and say plainly the great truth of our time; that the wealth of the state is not the prosperity of the people. Macaulay and the Mills and all the regular run of the Early Victorians, took it for granted that if Manchester was getting richer, we had got hold of the key to comfort and progress. Carlyle pointed out (with stronger sagacity and humour than he showed on any other question) that it was just as true to say that Manchester was getting poorer as that it was getting richer: or, in other words, that Manchester was not getting richer at all, but only some of the less pleasing people in Manchester. In this matter he is to be noted in connection with national developments much later; for he thus became the first prophet of the Socialists. Sartor Resartus is an admirable fantasia; The French Revolution is, with all its faults, a really fine piece of history; the lectures on Heroes contain some masterly sketches of personalities. But I think it is in Past and Present, and the essay on Chartism, that Carlyle achieves the work he was chosen by gods and men to achieve; which possibly might not have been achieved by a happier or more healthy-minded man. He never rose to more deadly irony than in such macabre descriptions as that of the poor woman proving her sisterhood with the rich by giving them all typhoid fever; or that perfect piece of badinage about "Overproduction of Shirts"; in which he imagines the aristocrats claiming to be quite clear of this offence. "Will you bandy accusations, will you accuse us of overproduction? We take the Heavens and the Earth to witness that we have produced nothing at all.... He that accuses us of producing, let him show himself. Let him say what and when." And he never wrote so sternly and justly as when he compared the "divine sorrow" of Dante with the "undivine sorrow" of Utilitarianism, which had already come down to talking about the breeding of the poor and to hinting at infanticide. This is a representative quarrel; for if the Utilitarian spirit reached its highest point in Mill, it certainly reached its lowest point in Malthus.

One last element in the influence of Carlyle ought to be mentioned; because it very strongly dominated his disciples--especially Kingsley, and to some extent Tennyson and Ruskin. Because he frowned at the cockney cheerfulness of the cheaper economists, they and others represented him as a pessimist, and reduced all his azure infinities to a fit of the blues. But Carlyle's philosophy, more carefully considered, will be found to be dangerously optimist rather than pessimist. As a thinker Carlyle is not sad, but recklessly and rather unscrupulously satisfied. For he seems to have held the theory that good could not be definitely defeated in this world; and

that everything in the long run finds its right level. It began with what we may call the "Bible of History" idea: that all affairs and politics were a clouded but unbroken revelation of the divine. Thus any enormous and unaltered human settlement--as the Norman Conquest or the secession of America--we must suppose to be the will of God. It lent itself to picturesque treatment; and Carlyle and the Carlyleans were above all things picturesque. It gave them at first a rhetorical advantage over the Catholic and other older schools. They could boast that their Creator was still creating; that he was in Man and Nature, and was not hedged round in a Paradise or imprisoned in a pyx. They could say their God had not grown too old for war: that He was present at Gettysburg and Gravelotte as much as at Gibeon and Gilboa. I do not mean that they literally said these particular things: they are what I should have said had I been bribed to defend their position. But they said things to the same effect: that what manages finally to happen, happens for a higher purpose. Carlyle said the French Revolution was a thing settled in the eternal councils to be; and therefore (and not because it was right) attacking it was "fighting against God." And Kingsley even carried the principle so far as to tell a lady she should remain in the Church of England mainly because God had put her there. But in spite of its superficial spirituality and encouragement, it is not hard to see how such a doctrine could be abused. It practically comes to saying that God is on the side of the big battalions--or at least, of the victorious ones. Thus a creed which set out to create conquerors would only corrupt soldiers; corrupt them with a craven and unsoldierly worship of success: and that which began as the philosophy of courage ends as the philosophy of cowardice. If, indeed, Carlyle were right in saying that right is only "rightly articulated" might, men would never articulate or move in any way. For no act can have might before it is done: if there is no right, it cannot rationally be done at all. This element, like the Anti-Utilitarian element, is to be kept in mind in connection with after developments: for in this Carlyle is the first cry of Imperialism, as (in the other case) of Socialism: and the two babes unborn who stir at the trumpet are Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. Rudyard Kipling. Kipling also carries on from Carlyle the concentration on the purely Hebraic parts of the Bible. The fallacy of this whole philosophy is that if God is indeed present at a modern battle, He may be present not as on Gilboa but Golgotha.

Carlyle's direct historical worship of strength and the rest of it was fortunately not very fruitful; and perhaps lingered only in Froude the historian. Even he is more an interruption than a continuity. Froude develops rather the harsher and more impatient moral counsels of his master than like Ruskin the more romantic and sympathetic. He carries on the tradition of Hero Worship: but carries far beyond Carlyle the practice of

worshipping people who cannot rationally be called heroes. In this matter that eccentric eye of the seer certainly helped Carlyle: in Cromwell and Frederick the Great there was at least something self-begotten, original or mystical; if they were not heroes they were at least demigods or perhaps demons. But Froude set himself to the praise of the Tudors, a much lower class of people; ill-conditioned prosperous people who merely waxed fat and kicked. Such strength as Henry VIII had was the strength of a badly trained horse that bolts, not of any clear or courageous rider who controls him. There is a sort of strong man mentioned in Scripture who, because he masters himself, is more than he that takes a city. There is another kind of strong man (known to the medical profession) who cannot master himself; and whom it may take half a city to take alive. But for all that he is a low lunatic, and not a hero; and of that sort were too many of the heroes whom Froude attempted to praise. A kind of instinct kept Carlyle from over-praising Henry VIII; or that highly cultivated and complicated liar, Queen Elizabeth. Here, the only importance of this is that one of Carlyle's followers carried further that "strength" which was the real weakness of Carlyle. I have heard that Froude's life of Carlyle was unsympathetic; but if it was so it was a sort of parricide. For the rest, like Macaulay, he was a picturesque and partisan historian: but, like Macaulay (and unlike the craven scientific historians of to-day) he was not ashamed of being partisan or of being picturesque. Such studies as he wrote on the Elizabethan seamen and adventurers, represent very triumphantly the sort of romance of England that all this school was attempting to establish; and link him up with Kingsley and the rest.

Ruskin may be very roughly regarded as the young lieutenant of Carlyle in his war on Utilitarian Radicalism: but as an individual he presents many and curious divergences. In the matter of style, he enriched English without disordering it. And in the matter of religion (which was the key of this age as of every other) he did not, like Carlyle, set up the romance of the great Puritans as a rival to the romance of the Catholic Church. Rather he set up and worshipped all the arts and trophies of the Catholic Church as a rival to the Church itself. None need dispute that he held a perfectly tenable position if he chose to associate early Florentine art with a Christianity still comparatively pure, and such sensualities as the Renaissance bred with the corruption of a Papacy. But this does not alter, as a merely artistic fact, the strange air of ill-ease and irritation with which Ruskin seems to tear down the gargoyles of Amiens or the marbles of Venice, as things of which Europe is not worthy; and take them away with him to a really careful museum, situated dangerously near Clapham. Many of the great men of that generation, indeed, had a sort of divided mind; an ethical headache which was literally a "splitting headache"; for there was a schism in the

sympathies. When these men looked at some historic object, like the Catholic Church or the French Revolution, they did not know whether they loved or hated it most. Carlyle's two eyes were out of focus, as one may say, when he looked at democracy: he had one eye on Valmy and the other on Sedan. In the same way, Ruskin had a strong right hand that wrote of the great mediæval minsters in tall harmonies and traceries as splendid as their own; and also, so to speak, a weak and feverish left hand that was always fidgeting and trying to take the pen away--and write an evangelical tract about the immorality of foreigners. Many of their contemporaries were the same. The sea of Tennyson's mind was troubled under its serene surface. The incessant excitement of Kingsley, though romantic and attractive in many ways, was a great deal more like Nervous Christianity than Muscular Christianity. It would be quite unfair to say of Ruskin that there was any major inconsistency between his mediæval tastes and his very unmediæval temper: and minor inconsistencies do not matter in anybody. But it is not quite unfair to say of him that he seemed to want all parts of the Cathedral except the altar.

As an artist in prose he is one of the most miraculous products of the extremely poetical genius of England. The length of a Ruskin sentence is like that length in the long arrow that was boasted of by the drawers of the long bow. He draws, not a cloth-yard shaft but a long lance to his ear: he shoots a spear. But the whole goes light as a bird and straight as a bullet. There is no Victorian writer before him to whom he even suggests a comparison, technically considered, except perhaps De Quincey; who also employed the long rich rolling sentence that, like a rocket, bursts into stars at the end. But De Quincey's sentences, as I have said, have always a dreamy and insecure sense about them, like the turret on toppling turret of some mad sultan's pagoda. Ruskin's sentence branches into brackets and relative clauses as a straight strong tree branches into boughs and bifurcations, rather shaking off its burden than merely adding to it. It is interesting to remember that Ruskin wrote some of the best of these sentences in the attempt to show that he did understand the growth of trees, and that nobody else did--except Turner, of course. It is also (to those acquainted with his perverse and wild rhetorical prejudices) even more amusing to remember that if a Ruskin sentence (occupying one or two pages of small print) does not remind us of the growth of a tree, the only other thing it does remind of is the triumphant passage of a railway train.

Ruskin left behind him in his turn two quite separate streams of inspiration. The first and more practical was concerned, like Carlyle's Chartism, with a challenge to the social conclusions of the orthodox economists. He was not so great a man as Carlyle, but he was a much more clear-headed man; and

the point and stab of his challenge still really stands and sticks, like a dagger in a dead man. He answered the theory that we must always get the cheapest labour we can, by pointing out that we never do get the cheapest labour we can, in any matter about which we really care twopence. We do not get the cheapest doctor. We either get a doctor who charges nothing or a doctor who charges a recognised and respectable fee. We do not trust the cheapest bishop. We do not allow admirals to compete. We do not tell generals to undercut each other on the eve of a war. We either employ none of them or we employ all of them at an official rate of pay. All this was set out in the strongest and least sentimental of his books, Unto this Last; but many suggestions of it are scattered through Sesame and Lilies, The Political Economy of Art, and even Modern Painters. On this side of his soul Ruskin became the second founder of Socialism. The argument was not by any means a complete or unconquerable weapon, but I think it knocked out what little remained of the brains of the early Victorian rationalists. It is entirely nonsensical to speak of Ruskin as a lounging æsthete, who strolled into economics, and talked sentimentalism. In plain fact, Ruskin was seldom so sensible and logical (right or wrong) as when he was talking about economics. He constantly talked the most glorious nonsense about landscape and natural history, which it was his business to understand. Within his own limits, he talked the most cold common sense about political economy, which was no business of his at all.

On the other side of his literary soul, his mere unwrapping of the wealth and wonder of European art, he set going another influence, earlier and vaguer than his influence on Socialism. He represented what was at first the Pre-Raphaelite School in painting, but afterwards a much larger and looser Pre-Raphaelite School in poetry and prose. The word "looser" will not be found unfair if we remember how Swinburne and all the wildest friends of the Rossettis carried this movement forward. They used the mediæval imagery to blaspheme the mediæval religion. Ruskin's dark and doubtful decision to accept Catholic art but not Catholic ethics had borne rapid or even flagrant fruit by the time that Swinburne, writing about a harlot, composed a learned and sympathetic and indecent parody on the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.

With the poets I deal in another part of this book; but the influence of Ruskin's great prose touching art criticism can best be expressed in the name of the next great prose writer on such subjects. That name is Walter Pater: and the name is the full measure of the extent to which Ruskin's vague but vast influence had escaped from his hands. Pater eventually joined the Church of Rome (which would not have pleased Ruskin at all), but it is surely fair to say of the mass of his work that its moral tone is neither Puritan nor Catholic, but strictly and splendidly Pagan. In Pater we

have Ruskin without the prejudices, that is, without the funny parts. I may be wrong, but I cannot recall at this moment a single passage in which Pater's style takes a holiday or in which his wisdom plays the fool. Newman and Ruskin were as careful and graceful stylists as he. Newman and Ruskin were as serious, elaborate, and even academic thinkers as he. But Ruskin let himself go about railways. Newman let himself go about Kingsley. Pater cannot let himself go for the excellent reason that he wants to stay: to stay at the point where all the keenest emotions meet, as he explains in the splendid peroration of The Renaissance. The only objection to being where all the keenest emotions meet is that you feel none of them.

In this sense Pater may well stand for a substantial summary of the æsthetes, apart from the purely poetical merits of men like Rossetti and Swinburne. Like Swinburne and others he first attempted to use mediæval tradition without trusting it. These people wanted to see Paganism through Christianity: because it involved the incidental amusement of seeing through Christianity itself. They not only tried to be in all ages at once (which is a very reasonable ambition, though not often realised), but they wanted to be on all sides at once: which is nonsense. Swinburne tries to question the philosophy of Christianity in the metres of a Christmas carol: and Dante Rossetti tries to write as if he were Christina Rossetti. Certainly the almost successful summit of all this attempt is Pater's superb passage on the Mona Lisa; in which he seeks to make her at once a mystery of good and a mystery of evil. The philosophy is false; even evidently false, for it bears no fruit to-day. There never was a woman, not Eve herself in the instant of temptation, who could smile the same smile as the mother of Helen and the mother of Mary. But it is the high-water mark of that vast attempt at an impartiality reached through art: and no other mere artist ever rose so high again.

Apart from this Ruskinian offshoot through Pre-Raphaelitism into what was called Æstheticism, the remains of the inspiration of Carlyle fill a very large part in the Victorian life, but not strictly so large a part in the Victorian literature. Charles Kingsley was a great publicist; a popular preacher; a popular novelist; and (in two cases at least) a very good novelist. His Water Babies is really a breezy and roaring freak; like a holiday at the seaside--a holiday where one talks natural history without taking it seriously. Some of the songs in this and other of his works are very real songs: notably, "When all the World is Young, Lad," which comes very near to being the only true defence of marriage in the controversies of the nineteenth century. But when all this is allowed, no one will seriously rank Kingsley, in the really literary sense, on the level of Carlyle or Ruskin, Tennyson or Browning, Dickens or Thackeray: and if such a place cannot be given to him, it can be given even

less to his lusty and pleasant friend, Tom Hughes, whose personality floats towards the frankness of the Boy's Own Paper; or to his deep, suggestive metaphysical friend Maurice, who floats rather towards The Hibbert Journal. The moral and social influence of these things is not to be forgotten: but they leave the domain of letters. The voice of Carlyle is not heard again in letters till the coming of Kipling and Henley.

One other name of great importance should appear here, because it cannot appear very appropriately anywhere else: the man hardly belonged to the same school as Ruskin and Carlyle, but fought many of their battles, and was even more concentrated on their main task--the task of convicting liberal bourgeois England of priggishness and provinciality. I mean, of course, Matthew Arnold. Against Mill's "liberty" and Carlyle's "strength" and Ruskin's "nature," he set up a new presence and entity which he called "culture," the disinterested play of the mind through the sifting of the best books and authorities. Though a little dandified in phrase, he was undoubtedly serious and public-spirited in intention. He sometimes talked of culture almost as if it were a man, or at least a church (for a church has a sort of personality): some may suspect that culture was a man, whose name was Matthew Arnold. But Arnold was not only right but highly valuable. If we have said that Carlyle was a man that saw things, we may add that Arnold was chiefly valuable as a man who knew things. Well as he was endowed intellectually, his power came more from information than intellect. He simply happened to know certain things, that Carlyle didn't know, that Kingsley didn't know, that Huxley and Herbert Spencer didn't know: that England didn't know. He knew that England was a part of Europe: and not so important a part as it had been the morning after Waterloo. He knew that England was then (as it is now) an oligarchical State, and that many great nations are not. He knew that a real democracy need not live and does not live in that perpetual panic about using the powers of the State, which possessed men like Spencer and Cobden. He knew a rational minimum of culture and common courtesy could exist and did exist throughout large democracies. He knew the Catholic Church had been in history "the Church of the multitude": he knew it was not a sect. He knew that great landlords are no more a part of the economic law than nigger-drivers: he knew that small owners could and did prosper. He was not so much the philosopher as the man of the world: he reminded us that Europe was a society while Ruskin was treating it as a picture gallery. He was a sort of Heaven-sent courier. His frontal attack on the vulgar and sullen optimism of Victorian utility may be summoned up in the admirable sentence, in which he asked the English what was the use of a train taking them quickly from Islington to Camberwell, if it only took them "from a dismal and illiberal life in Islington to a dismal and illiberal life in

Camberwell?"

His attitude to that great religious enigma round which all these great men were grouped as in a ring, was individual and decidedly curious. He seems to have believed that a "Historic Church," that is, some established organisation with ceremonies and sacred books, etc., could be perpetually preserved as a sort of vessel to contain the spiritual ideas of the age, whatever those ideas might happen to be. He clearly seems to have contemplated a melting away of the doctrines of the Church and even of the meaning of the words: but he thought a certain need in man would always be best satisfied by public worship and especially by the great religious literatures of the past. He would embalm the body that it might often be revisited by the soul--or souls. Something of the sort has been suggested by Dr. Coit and others of the ethical societies in our own time. But while Arnold would loosen the theological bonds of the Church, he would not loosen the official bonds of the State. You must not disestablish the Church: you must not even leave the Church: you must stop inside it and think what you choose. Enemies might say that he was simply trying to establish and endow Agnosticism. It is fairer and truer to say that unconsciously he was trying to restore Paganism: for this State Ritualism without theology, and without much belief, actually was the practice of the ancient world. Arnold may have thought that he was building an altar to the Unknown God; but he was really building it to Divus Cæsar.

As a critic he was chiefly concerned to preserve criticism itself; to set a measure to praise and blame and support the classics against the fashions. It is here that it is specially true of him, if of no writer else, that the style was the man. The most vital thing he invented was a new style: founded on the patient unravelling of the tangled Victorian ideas, as if they were matted hair under a comb. He did not mind how elaborately long he made a sentence, so long as he made it clear. He would constantly repeat whole phrases word for word in the same sentence, rather than risk ambiguity by abbreviation. His genius showed itself in turning this method of a laborious lucidity into a peculiarly exasperating form of satire and controversy. Newman's strength was in a sort of stifled passion, a dangerous patience of polite logic and then: "Cowards! if I advanced a step you would run away: it is not you I fear. Di me terrent, et Jupiter hostis." If Newman seemed suddenly to fly into a temper, Carlyle seemed never to fly out of one. But Arnold kept a smile of heart-broken forbearance, as of the teacher in an idiot school, that was enormously insulting. One trick he often tried with success. If his opponent had said something foolish, like "the destiny of England is in the great heart of England," Arnold would repeat the phrase again and again until it looked more foolish than it really was. Thus he recurs again and

again to "the British College of Health in the New Road" till the reader wants to rush out and burn the place down. Arnold's great error was that he sometimes thus wearied us of his own phrases, as well as of his enemies'.

These names are roughly representative of the long series of protests against the cold commercial rationalism which held Parliament and the schools through the earlier Victorian time, in so far as those protests were made in the name of neglected intellect, insulted art, forgotten heroism and desecrated religion. But already the Utilitarian citadel had been more heavily bombarded on the other side by one lonely and unlettered man of genius.

The rise of Dickens is like the rising of a vast mob. This is not only because his tales are indeed as crowded and populous as towns: for truly it was not so much that Dickens appeared as that a hundred Dickens characters appeared. It is also because he was the sort of man who has the impersonal impetus of a mob: what Poe meant when he truly said that popular rumour, if really spontaneous, was like the intuition of the individual man of genius. Those who speak scornfully of the ignorance of the mob do not err as to the fact itself; their error is in not seeing that just as a crowd is comparatively ignorant, so a crowd is comparatively innocent. It will have the old and human faults; but it is not likely to specialise in the special faults of that particular society: because the effort of the strong and successful in all ages is to keep the poor out of society. If the higher castes have developed some special moral beauty or grace, as they occasionally do (for instance, mediæval chivalry), it is likely enough, of course, that the mass of men will miss it. But if they have developed some perversion or over-emphasis, as they much more often do (for instance, the Renaissance poisoning), then it will be the tendency of the mass of men to miss that too. The point might be put in many ways; you may say if you will that the poor are always at the tail of the procession, and that whether they are morally worse or better depends on whether humanity as a whole is proceeding towards heaven or hell. When humanity is going to hell, the poor are always nearest to heaven.

Dickens was a mob--and a mob in revolt; he fought by the light of nature; he had not a theory, but a thirst. If any one chooses to offer the cheap sarcasm that his thirst was largely a thirst for milk-punch, I am content to reply with complete gravity and entire contempt that in a sense this is perfectly true. His thirst was for things as humble, as human, as laughable as that daily bread for which we cry to God. He had no particular plan of reform; or, when he had, it was startlingly petty and parochial compared with the deep, confused clamour of comradeship and insurrection that fills all his narrative. It would not be gravely unjust to him to compare him to his own heroine, Arabella Allen, who "didn't know what she did like," but who (when

confronted with Mr. Bob Sawyer) "did know what she didn't like." Dickens did know what he didn't like. He didn't like the Unrivalled Happiness which Mr. Roebuck praised; the economic laws that were working so faultlessly in Fever Alley; the wealth that was accumulating so rapidly in Bleeding Heart Yard. But, above all, he didn't like the mean side of the Manchester philosophy: the preaching of an impossible thrift and an intolerable temperance. He hated the implication that because a man was a miser in Latin he must also be a miser in English. And this meanness of the Utilitarians had gone very far--infecting many finer minds who had fought the Utilitarians. In the Edinburgh Review, a thing like Malthus could be championed by a man like Macaulay.

The twin root facts of the revolution called Dickens are these: first, that he attacked the cold Victorian compromise; second, that he attacked it without knowing he was doing it--certainly without knowing that other people were doing it. He was attacking something which we will call Mr. Gradgrind. He was utterly unaware (in any essential sense) that any one else had attacked Mr. Gradgrind. All the other attacks had come from positions of learning or cultured eccentricity of which he was entirely ignorant, and to which, therefore (like a spirited fellow), he felt a furious hostility. Thus, for instance, he hated that Little Bethel to which Kit's mother went: he hated it simply as Kit hated it. Newman could have told him it was hateful, because it had no root in religious history; it was not even a sapling sprung of the seed of some great human and heathen tree: it was a monstrous mushroom that grows in the moonshine and dies in the dawn. Dickens knew no more of religious history than Kit; he simply smelt the fungus, and it stank. Thus, again, he hated that insolent luxury of a class counting itself a comfortable exception to all mankind; he hated it as Kate Nickleby hated Sir Mulberry Hawke--by instinct. Carlyle could have told him that all the world was full of that anger against the impudent fatness of the few. But when Dickens wrote about Kate Nickleby, he knew about as much of the world--as Kate Nickleby. He did write The Tale of Two Cities long afterwards; but that was when he had been instructed by Carlyle. His first revolutionism was as private and internal as feeling sea-sick. Thus, once more, he wrote against Mr. Gradgrind long before he created him. In The Chimes, conceived in quite his casual and charitable season, with the Christmas Carol and the Cricket on the Hearth, he hit hard at the economists. Ruskin, in the same fashion, would have told him that the worst thing about the economists was that they were not economists: that they missed many essential things even in economics. But Dickens did not know whether they were economists or not: he only knew that they wanted hitting. Thus, to take a last case out of many, Dickens travelled in a French railway train, and noticed that this eccentric nation provided him with wine that he could drink and sandwiches

he could eat, and manners he could tolerate. And remembering the ghastly sawdust-eating waiting-rooms of the North English railways, he wrote that rich chapter in Mugby Junction. Matthew Arnold could have told him that this was but a part of the general thinning down of European civilisation in these islands at the edge of it; that for two or three thousand years the Latin society has learnt how to drink wine, and how not to drink too much of it. Dickens did not in the least understand the Latin society: but he did understand the wine. If (to prolong an idle but not entirely false metaphor) we have called Carlyle a man who saw and Arnold a man who knew, we might truly call Dickens a man who tasted, that is, a man who really felt. In spite of all the silly talk about his vulgarity, he really had, in the strict and serious sense, good taste. All real good taste is gusto--the power of appreciating the presence--or the absence--of a particular and positive pleasure. He had no learning; he was not misled by the label on the bottle--for that is what learning largely meant in his time. He opened his mouth and shut his eyes and saw what the Age of Reason would give him. And, having tasted it, he spat it out.

I am constrained to consider Dickens here among the fighters; though I ought (on the pure principles of Art) to be considering him in the chapter which I have allotted to the story-tellers. But we should get the whole Victorian perspective wrong, in my opinion at least, if we did not see that Dickens was primarily the most successful of all the onslaughts on the solid scientific school; because he did not attack from the standpoint of extraordinary faith, like Newman; or the standpoint of extraordinary inspiration, like Carlyle; or the standpoint of extraordinary detachment or serenity, like Arnold; but from the standpoint of quite ordinary and quite hearty dislike. To give but one instance more, Matthew Arnold, trying to carry into England constructive educational schemes which he could see spread like a clear railway map all over the Continent, was much badgered about what he really thought was wrong with English middle-class education. Despairing of explaining to the English middle class the idea of high and central public instruction, as distinct from coarse and hole-and-corner private instruction, he invoked the aid of Dickens. He said the English middle-class school was the sort of school where Mr. Creakle sat, with his buttered toast and his cane. Now Dickens had probably never seen any other kind of school--certainly he had never understood the systematic State Schools in which Arnold had learnt his lesson. But he saw the cane and the buttered toast, and he knew that it was all wrong. In this sense, Dickens, the great romanticist, is truly the great realist also. For he had no abstractions: he had nothing except realities out of which to make a romance.

With Dickens, then, re-arises that reality with which I began and which (curtly, but I think not falsely) I have called Cobbett. In dealing with fiction as such, I shall have occasion to say wherein Dickens is weaker and stronger than that England of the eighteenth century: here it is sufficient to say that he represents the return of Cobbett in this vital sense; that he is proud of being the ordinary man. No one can understand the thousand caricatures by Dickens who does not understand that he is comparing them all with his own common sense. Dickens, in the bulk, liked the things that Cobbett had liked; what is perhaps more to the point, he hated the things that Cobbett had hated; the Tudors, the lawyers, the leisurely oppression of the poor. Cobbett's fine fighting journalism had been what is nowadays called "personal," that is, it supposed human beings to be human. But Cobbett was also personal in the less satisfactory sense; he could only multiply monsters who were exaggerations of his enemies or exaggerations of himself. Dickens was personal in a more godlike sense; he could multiply persons. He could create all the farce and tragedy of his age over again, with creatures unborn to sin and creatures unborn to suffer. That which had not been achieved by the fierce facts of Cobbett, the burning dreams of Carlyle, the white-hot proofs of Newman, was really or very nearly achieved by a crowd of impossible people. In the centre stood that citadel of atheist industrialism: and if indeed it has ever been taken, it was taken by the rush of that unreal army.