

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

a preface to the republication of his famous sermon on "Samson a type of Christ." How sharply it all reminds us that underneath all our creeds and even our convictions, there is the ultimate fact of the heart itself! Had the young man but known it, Strudwick's tapestry was a prophetic foreshadowing of his own life, for David Crosley was something of a Samson in his strength and in his weakness.

Other values of denominational history which might be illustrated from this old book I must not dwell upon—the correction of sweeping generalizations, repeated from book to book, the illumination of the general historical background of the age, the way in which some incident of the past becomes a symbol and apt expression of permanent truth, like John Robinson's famous word about the more light and truth from the Bible. But I think that the responsibility lies on all who are concerned for the study of our denominational history to convince men of the value of that study by their own use of it, in something more than a merely antiquarian interest.

H. WHEELER ROBINSON.

The Poet as Interpreter

IN the cinder heaps which the war has left behind are to be found many nuggets of precious gold by the earnest seeker. Though the book trade may have suffered, English literature has profited by the Renaissance of English poetry.

For a few years before the war there had been noticeable a quickened interest in poetry, and even though no one had arisen to rank with Tennyson and Browning, there had evidently sprung up a school of writers who were not to be the idle singers of an empty day, but voices heralding the dawn of a new day; sometimes pleading for the rights and recognition of a class of the neglected, or singing of the experiences, when men pass from darkness to light. Perhaps Masfield at times puts into narrative poetry what might well have been told in prose, and some of the moods of Patrick Macgill may unfit him for reaching the grandest heights of song; but where the music is sacrificed the intense passion becomes both arresting and magnetic, and as we listen to this navy poet, singing out the true epic of labour,

we realize that in his soul there burns some of the fire of "the Immortals." In Middleton we have less passion, but more music. But without drawing any comparison, one recognized even before the war, a new and promising school of English poets.

For a few years we have had a poetry society and a *Poetry Review*, whose object has been and is to cultivate the imagination and encourage those with the gift of song. The share taken in these enterprises by Mr. Stephen Phillips, must have won the admiration of all lovers of poetry, and some of the poems and studies of poets and criticisms have been worthy of a permanent place in our English literature. This work has no doubt widened the interest in poetry, especially on its artistic side, and moved many to express themselves in that way. As for creative powers, the war put all these efforts in the shade, but as soon as the souls of men were stirred to their depths, and men were brought face to face with danger and death, and hearts were pierced with great sorrows, and filled with great hopes and purposes, expression for all these was sought, in the form in which men have ever expressed the deepest and highest within. Little volumes of verse began to appear on our bookstalls, and though some of these at times revealed crude literary craftsmanship, they also often revealed a spark of the quenchless fire of the soul, for we know that while mortals speak many tongues, the Immortals speak but one, and this we heard.

About many of these little books there is something of pathos and tragedy, for ere we had come to read their songs, some had become members of

The choir invisible
Of the immortal dead.

The late Alexander Maclaren once said to a few of us who were theological students—"Read the poets, the great poets, get saturated with them. I have got more from the poets than the theologians." At the time I was much surprised at the remark, but the surprise has diminished with the passing years. At the time I thought that great master of language was acknowledging a debt he owed to the poets for the way in which they had helped him in the gift of expression, but I can see now that he was acknowledging a far greater debt, and while my mind was wandering in the outer courts of the temple of truth, he was there in the Holy of Holies, with the great masters who had given to him intensity of soul, removed the scales from his eyes, so that he could see the things invisible to countless numbers, and then express in glowing eloquence what many felt but could not express. The office of the poet is not that of a decorator in

the realm of literature, but of one who is an interpreter in the realm of history and the house of life.

No doubt there are some who would question this, who have always thought of the poet as remote from life, not only as one far from the madding crowd, but uninterested in the problems and studies which agitate the crowd, and sometimes drive them to the verge of madness. But the man who declared that poetry was but a convenient way of talking nonsense, declared at the same time that the spirit of the muses had never warmed and illumined the chambers of his soul.

Such an idea, however, is not at all uncommon. To a great many the Poet is a dreamer and idler, walking through this practical world with his head in the air, and while to the great toiling mass "life is real and life is earnest," to him it is but a day dream, with neither reality nor earnestness in it. It is to such people that poetry is but an ornament of literature.

A distinguished writer has told us to take a good dose of history if we get into the dumps, but a good dose of history will banish all the superficial ideas regarding poets and poetry, and reveal to us the fact that the truly great poet has touched life at the springs, and the influence has been cleansing and quickening. There have been exceptional periods when they have been the very soul of their age, and the very power and glory of kings and assemblies have paled before the presence and power of the poet, whose name has grown more luminous with the passing years, while the names of princes and monarchs have been as the stars of the night, which the dawn has wiped out one by one.

For an illustration of this we need not travel away to Italy, where Dante reigns as king. We need go no further than our own Commonwealth period, and that great Puritan prince among men, John Milton. Both Dante and Milton are the best illuminators of the ages in which they lived. If you link Savonarola with Dante, you have the poet and the preacher, the two most mighty personalities connected with that wonderful city of Florence. They were not merely the ornaments of the city, but were the moulders of its life, the shapers of its constitution, and the fountain of its noblest impulses and efforts for freedom. Who will deny that the richest possession of that fair city at the present time is the memory of these two great sons of God, whose names are so great and so renowned? And while there is much in the great poem of Dante which belongs to humanity, there is very much that belongs to the tangled web of Tuscan history.

These remarks apply just as much or even more to John Milton and English Puritanism. In studying that period

of our history, it is somewhat difficult to separate the religious and political, some may see in them the relation of cause and effect. But whether considering their ideals of freedom from the religious or political standpoint, we find that the language in use is the language of the Bible. It was the handbook of the people, it was the pearl of great price in their home and life.

Not only was it the language of the people, but it was a Revelation of the sphere in which the minds and spirits of the people moved. A Bible reading people were naturally interested in those questions of God and the soul, of sin and redemption, which are at the very foundation of "the old Book." Their idea of inspiration may not be ours, much of their theology we may reject, but the thing supreme with them was that which the earnest souls of all the ages have been in quest. Now John Milton the Poet was the truest incarnation of the spirit of the Puritan and Commonwealth period, with all its intensity and its limitations. It is to be feared that for some generations many of the religious teachers and writers went to John Milton instead of going to their Bibles and their experience, and English theology became more Miltonian than Biblical.

Mr. Garrod, the new Professor of Poetry at Oxford, has told us in his inaugural address "that the race of long-haired poets is dead.

Trimmed are all our poets' tresses,
 'Fallen beneath the barber's art—
 Gone the day when such excesses
 Marked the bards as men apart.
 How unlike the older stager,
 They avoid the mane or mop,
 And the fiercest sergeant-major
 Would approve their present crop.

And another thing has vanished—
 Rhyme, that served the old brigade,
 Many bards have lately banished
 From the poet's stock-in-trade;
 Odder still, the lilt that trembles
 In the songs they now compose,
 And the lyric oft resembles
 Quaintly punctuated prose.

Not that I would have them muzzle
 Genius on an ancient plan,
 But they bring an awkward puzzle
 For the plain and common man :

Rhyme they seldom, rarely run to,
 Hair is gone beyond recall—
 How on earth, I ask, is one to
 Recognize the bard at all.

(“Lucio,” in *Manchester Guardian*.)

When Mr. Garrod has had his say, there are, however, two elements or facts in all true poetry which have to be carefully considered, and one of these is very difficult to lay hold of. These are (1) the poet's own personality, and (2) the spirit of the age in which the poet lived. The personality may be plain to a sensitive and sympathetic reader from the first, but not so with the second, for the spirit of an age is hardly even definable to the age itself. To see and understand some things we must stand apart. We may be sure of the personal quality of A. E. Houseman and John Masefield, and be able to point out why those qualities are personal, and contribute something to the record of the human spirit, but just yet it would be more difficult to say clearly where these men find the special point of kinship to the new school of English poetry which has arisen in our midst.

In the above verses by Lucio, that writer comments on the absence of rhyme in our modern poetry.

And the lyric oft resembles
 Quaintly punctuated prose.

Rhyme is not absolutely essential to great poetry. It is an aid to memory, and poetry will very often express itself in that form. Rhythm is much more essential, and is quite natural in times of intense feeling and passion. Language gains a certain rhythmic movement in all intense hours, and corresponds to the movements of the soul. Intense anger and love give a certain eloquence to almost every man. So while rhyme and rhythm usually accompany poetry, they do not constitute it, nor are they essential to it. Poetry is the fittest human expression of the highest and strongest, and the deepest thoughts and feelings of which we are capable. Wordsworth calls it “the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge.” Coleridge says “it is the blossom and fragrancy of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language.” Another has defined it “the fine wine that is served at the banquet of life.” All true poetry is truth dressed in her wedding garments. Theodore Watts Dunton, than whom there is no higher authority on this subject, says, “Absolute poetry is the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language.”

If that be the nature of poetry, how sensitive must be the mind and soul of the poet. Of all men he will be the

one most responsive to all that is going on around, of all men he will be the one who cannot get away from the spirit of his age; and in reading his work we shall be looking into a magic mirror, in which we can see the comedy and tragedy which are being played on the great stage.

J. R. Seeley, in his *Expansion of England*, criticized the method of past historians in their divisions of history. He thought that too much had been made of the accessions and deaths of kings and queens. The real dividing lines he thought should be the beginnings of great movements, or great national efforts for the gaining of certain great ends. Many of these lines of demarcation are oftentimes very faint and difficult to discover, and a similar difficulty besets one in finding a period with which to deal with the poets as interpreters of their age. For the sake of convenience, and to keep within limits fairly familiar, we perhaps cannot do better than take the Victorian era, but in doing this it will be needful to get some view of the historic background, and the influences at work leading up to that period. In doing this we shall be able to see what these influences helped to produce in the conditions and lives of the people, making manifest to us the close kinship there is between Poetry and Life.

Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, but to understand the England of that period it is needful to take a backward look. When the century opened the great struggle with France had been going on for seven years, and this continued until 1815. But in the period from 1793 to 1815, not only was there the struggle with France going on, but there was a spirit of revolution abroad. From the fall of Napoleon to the great Reform Bill of 1832, we have another stage of English history. We then move on from 1832—1853, from the passing of the Reform Bill to the Crimean War. There is no need to come further at this point. "When we survey the 19th century from the closing years, the one fact that strikes us is, that its earlier half was a time of much more rapid and sweeping change than its second. . . . The most cursory glance is enough to show us that the difference between the England of 1852 and the England of 1899, is far less than that between the England of 1801 and that of 1852. Almost all the great movements, social, economic, and political, which have given the century its character, were all well developed before the Crimean War. It is much the same with literature. The great writers of the century had started on their career before that date. . . . The England of 1801 knew not the steamboat and the railway, the electric telegraph and illuminating power of gas. The England of

1852 was habitually employing all these, though it had much to learn in perfecting their use."

"The greatest change of all, the transformation of the United Kingdom from a state mainly dependent on agriculture to an essentially manufacturing community, is also the work of the first half of the nineteenth century," and this was a change pregnant with great issues, affecting both literature and religion.

That revolutionary spirit which ruled so widely in the early part of the nineteenth century, was largely brought about by new ideas concerning man which we now call democratic. They gave the impulse to the poetry of Byron and Shelley, but after their death, there was a period of exhaustion in English poetry. There was no passion for or against these ideas left in the nation, and England, thus deprived for a time of these animating conceptions concerning man, sank into a dreary commonplace. When the passion revived, it took the form of political agitation and struggle. For many years there had been a general movement toward a reform of administration, and making the welfare of the people a matter of more vital concern, but this spirit had been more felt on the continent than in this country, and particularly in France. There was abroad the notion of the infinite perfectibility of human nature. There was the passion for freedom, finding an eloquent voice in Rousseau. There was abroad the belief in the unlimited power and right of the sovereign people. Now all this, and the subsequent work of the Revolution in France, showed itself to a conservative mind like Burke's, only on its destructive side. "Man is born free," ran Rousseau's famous motto, "and everywhere he is in chains." If this be so the breaking of chains must be the preliminary of any free movement, but the chains of Rousseau are to Burke the sacred and indispensable traditions which hold society together.

If we compare the state of England and France in 1815 when the revolutionary fires had somewhat died down, there can be no doubt that, in spite of revolutionary exhaustion, and her final defeat under Napoleon, the civilization of France had been in many points advanced beyond our own. Her population was awakened, as ours was to be in a milder form by the chartist agitation.

But alongside this revolutionary spirit there was growing up in our land an industrial system which was to have far-reaching effects. This of course had only become possible through the many discoveries and inventions which were filling the minds of men with wonder. England had grown strong at sea, and was becoming rich as a nation of shopkeepers. Her

condition by weathering the storm of the Revolution, had gained fresh lustre and added strength. At home factories were springing up on every hand, there were fresh possessions and expanding trade abroad. These confirmed the nation in its policy of isolation and internal strength. There was much poverty and degradation of the manual workers. They had crowded into the towns, their wages were at the lowest point, and the remedial legislation of the nineteenth century had not yet begun, scarcely contemplated. So many were busy fortune hunting, and others so much concerned about making a living, that the people were losing the art of living, while the nation was fast becoming materialized.

Though perhaps growing into a nation of shopkeepers, there was also growing up in our midst a great hunger for knowledge, and knowledge in that ordered and connected form which we call science. In certain branches of physical science much advance was made, and much exact knowledge was gained. The interest in these subjects became absorbing to many men, the results of their study gave to them a self-consciousness of power and a sense of self-sufficiency, which became disastrous to religious faith. This advance of the physical sciences so drained the interests of men from other things, that the flowers of faith began to wither because of neglect, and many began to think that the springs of life were within themselves. The development of industry and the growth of knowledge in that ordered form we call science, were two of the most important factors affecting the life and character of England in the nineteenth century. Along with the growth of these had grown that spirit of criticism or that critical school which felt that it had a mission to criticize everything from the foundation of faith to the sewerage system of every town and city in the land. No wonder that we entered upon a period of doubt and mental conflict such as had disastrous results, both in the individual lives and the lives of communities.

There is one other feature that must be noticed before we begin to note the relationship between those phases of English life and character and the poets and poetry of that age. The rapid development of our industrial system led to the rapid growth of our towns and cities. People flocked from the country to the town, and thus aggravated some of the worst features of town and city life. In seeking to cope with housing problems, the idea of beauty was left out in the cold. Town planning was unknown. So long as the place of business, whether factory, forge or foundry was making profit, it mattered not whether the streams were polluted, or the atmosphere, and multitudes lived absolutely

out of touch with beauty and with nature with all their uplifting and healing power, and while men were making gold the fine gold in the kingdom of life was slipping away, and the souls of men were shrinking. It was the recognition of this fact which led George Cadbury at a somewhat later date, to transfer the Cadbury works from the city to the country, and found Bournville, the garden city. That great philanthropist saw that men could not live amidst ugliness and squalor without being affected by it. The legacy of all these things is not yet all spent.

From that very imperfect sketch of some factors and features of our English life in the nineteenth century, and especially the part of it we speak of as the Victorian era, let us turn to a few of the men who were the singers of those crowded days. When Victoria came to the throne in 1837 Shelley, Byron, and Keats were dead. Wordsworth's most important work was finished. Tennyson, Browning, and Elizabeth Barrett had made their first appearance in print. Matthew Arnold was at school, and Arthur Hugh Clough entered Balliol College that year. The Rossettis were children, while Wm. Morris and Swinburne had only just come on the scene.

Though the greater part of Wordsworth's work was done, his influence was steadily growing. The eighteenth century is often spoken of as the age of reason. An age, cold and intellectual, and soul-less. Occasionally we hear the romantic note, but only occasionally. Many no doubt claim Blake and Gray as the pioneers of the Romantic revival in English poetry, but Wordsworth had the pre-eminence and his influence is immeasurable. He and Coleridge more than any others brought back the soul to English poetry. You feel as you read one like Pope that there is an artificiality about him, his flowers have no fragrance about them, they have not been grown out in the open; they have been made by some clever hands. Such poetry had no real throb of life in it, it was written to win the approval of a literary clique more than anything else. Wordsworth declared and acted on this principle, that there was not one language for books only, and another for the affairs of everyday life. He believed and declared that it was time the poets returned to nature, to natural and simple themes, and to clothe them in the plain language of the common people. He asserted the dignity of common life, and the sacredness of the natural affections. His work was a protest against the diseased sentiment, the faithless cynicism, which had corrupted the life of English poetry. He claimed for poetry a religious mission, and invested it with the sanctity of a Divine calling.

How contrary is all this to the sensational cynicism of Byron. Here is his idea of a poet and a portrait of Wordsworth himself.

But who is this with modest looks,
 And clad in sober russet gown?
 He murmurs by the running brooks
 A music sweeter than their own:
 He is retired as noontide dew,
 Or fountain in a noontide grove.

Now comes the question, how does such a character as Wordsworth, a great high priest of nature, come to be writing poetry, which brings to us serenity, and whose message is simplicity, at a time when the spirit of revolution is on every hand, as though living at the heart of a cyclone in a chamber named Peace. We do not go to him to be excited, but to be strengthened. Wm. Watson, in one of his glorious poems, says:

Poet who sleepest by this wandering wave,
 When thou wast born, what birthgift hadst thou then?
 To thee what wealth was that the Immortals gave—
 The wealth thou gavest in thy turn to men?
 Not Milton's keen translunar music thine,
 Not Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless, human view,
 Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine,
 Not yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.
 What hadst thou that could make so large amends
 For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed—
 Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends?
 Thou hadst for weary feet the gift of rest.

Men can only give what they possess. How came Wordsworth to possess this gift? We follow this lad from Cocker-mouth to the grammar school at Hawkshead, and there, often at nightfall when a storm was coming on, he would stand in the shelter of a rock and hear

Notes that are
 The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
 Or make their dim abode in distant winds.

At such times he was aware of the coming down upon him of "the visionary power" which is such an essential part of the poet's equipment. In October 1787, at the age of eighteen, he goes to St. John's College, Cambridge. During one of the long vacations we see him with a Welsh college friend, Jones, staff in hand, out on a fourteen weeks' tramp through France, Switzerland, and the North of Italy. All through France they saw a people rising with gladness to

welcome the dawn of what they believed a new era for mankind. But these two youths were not merely onlookers; they were sympathizers in the intoxication of the time. For a while Wordsworth was filled with the revolutionary spirit. He had seen the Revolution while it still wore its earliest auroral hues, when the people were mad with joy as at the dawn of a regenerated earth. As he saw it later, in all its ghastly horror, Wordsworth owns that "he threw himself headlong into the questions filling the minds of many, without the needful preparations, knowing little of the past history of France, and of her institutions, and wholly unversed in political philosophy. He only saw that the best ought to rule, and they don't." The excesses of the Revolutionists alienated his sympathies, and the "Reign of Terror" caused his return to his native land. Now comes a rebound from Democracy, and from this time onward Wordsworth subordinates man to nature.

Great things are done when man and mountain meet.

This line of Blake's was illustrated in a remarkable way in Wordsworth, and his rich gift was an indirect outcome of the revolutionary spirit which spread over Europe in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Now we turn from the revolutionary period and its influence on English poetry to the effects, the materializing effects of the industrial developments. Mechanical science and inventions did a great deal to lift England to the supreme place among the nations of the nineteenth century. For a time her place in the industrial world was unchallenged. Her growing wealth brought many blessings in its train, and they were shared in by the people as a whole, but with the gold there was much alloy. A materialistic philosophy sprang up, life came to be too much considered from that view point; it began to regulate the scale of values too much in the everyday life. Men began to talk as though they could live by bread alone.

Into this age, smitten by the materializing influences, came a few great souls, whose eagle eyes pierced the mist and the gloom, who saw the eternal behind the shifting things of the day, and whose life's mission became the making real to their day and generation the things unseen but yet eternal. They picked no quarrel with the men who said, "To-day is the day of science, of knowing." They said, "Science must widen her field of investigation, and go from nature to man, and then peer upward from man to God. The whence and whither of man, the individual and the race, are and have always been, the subjects of tireless investigation, and the

work must go on when the material scientist and logician have reached their limits." James Martineau played a noble part in this great struggle, and helped many back to a spiritual conception and interpretation of life. But the two most distinguished guests in the "House of the Interpreter" were Robert Browning and Alfred Tennyson. There was a wonderful intellectual strength about these two men, and especially Browning, but there was also the mystical element, and there is nothing unscientific in the mysticism of even the great mystics, for they simply claim to know without the intermediary of a logical process, and to know more. Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth, brought us back at a bound to the realities of nature, and to the "thoughts too deep for tears," lying within those realities. Browning and Tennyson took us further in some, indeed, in many ways; brought the mass of things in relation to a Central Idea of love and goodness. God became once more the dominant note in literature—the invisible shone through the visible.

These men were equipped for their task by their own mighty faith in things spiritual. From Tennyson's work it is evident that he did not come to this high estate at a bound, but passed through his season of doubt and anxiety, we hear a good deal of the—may we—and miss the note and ring of certainty, but he fought his doubts and gathered strength, and sang then of his faith with a music sweet as the harping of many harpers. Browning had a much smaller audience. His style repelled many, then in addition to that the music was missing. He had many admirers, and his students were drawn from many circles, but they were circles not very large, and only thinly peopled. We know that the lofty mountains are often shrouded with the mists. Many thought thus of Browning. But the difficulty with Browning is not in his style and language, but in this, that he is the poet of the soul, and has therefore to do with all the problems of faith. The inner life is the subject of his study, for he realized that the outer life was fast becoming almost everything to men. Now his supreme interest became the redemption and development of the soul. In the "Florentine Artist" he says:

Your business is to paint the souls of men;
Give us no more of body than shows soul.

He lifted up his voice like a trumpet, and cried to men, "Have faith in God," "Ye must be born again," "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned." He showed to men that Faith and Hope and Love were the makers of character, that growth was the evidence of the soul's vitality. That imperfection was a suggestion of Immortality, for

Progress is man's distinguishing mark alone;
 Not God's, and not the beasts': God is, they are,
 Man partly is, and wholly hopes to be.

Browning was a great warrior for the spiritual faith. The spring of his contagious optimism was his own faith in the personal Christ, the Son of God.

I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ
 Accepted by the reason, solves for thee
 All questions in the earth and out of it.

Yet to-day we have suggestions of Browning's religious scepticism. Where do we find a nobler faith and optimism?

My own hope is, a sun will pierce
 The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
 That after last returns the first,
 Though a wide compass round be fetched;
 That what began best can't end worst,
 Nor what God blest once prove accurst.

If there is not the same intellectual grappling spirit in Tennyson as in Browning when he deals with the unspiritual side of the life of his age, his intuition enables him to see what to many has been the unseen, and with his lyric gift he so sings of these unseen things that they finally become the grand realities in the lives of his readers. Browning battles against the materializing influences which are destroying the faith of men, and so enables the spiritual faith to have an opportunity of growth. Tennyson leads men and women straight for the Mount of Transfiguration, where they get their vision of "Jesus only," all heedless of those who are blocking the way.

It is hard for us to realize the unrest which came to fill the minds and hearts of men, as scientific study for a time advanced. The conquests of science in certain physical realms were very remarkable. Many old beliefs were undermined, and that sense of security which for some time had prevailed, especially among the middle classes, in the early Victorian era, was very much interfered with. First came questionings, then grave doubts, and then the painful drifting from the old moorings. There is something truly pathetic in the confession of Professor J. G. Romanes in the conclusion of his *Candid Examination of Theism*. "And forasmuch as I am far from being able to agree with those who affirm, that the twilight doctrine of this new faith is a desirable substitute for the waning splendour of the old, I am not ashamed to confess that with this virtual negation of God, the universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness; and although from hence-

forth the precept—to work while it is day will doubtless gain an intensified force, from the terribly intensified meaning of the words that—the night cometh when no man can work,—yet, when at times I think, as think at times I must of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed, which once was mine, and the lonely mystery of existence as now I find it, at such times I shall ever feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pangs of what my nature is susceptible.”

That period of doubt which one like Romanes felt so keenly, was felt even more so by Arthur Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold. They had no gleam that they could follow wholeheartedly; for them there seemed to be nothing but broken lights, and some of these misleading. They at last came to themselves, but found they were in a far country, and began to be in want. They could not live in spiritual bankruptcy, and were determined to arise and find the way home. In their poems there was sincerity, but sadness, and no wonder. Arnold described himself as

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.

Much of Arnold's poetry was the poetry of opposition. He could not disentangle himself from the pressure of his age, and he hated that pressure. He was, however, a revelation of the experience through which many were then passing. He was a child of that age. Only at intervals the clouds lifted for him, and He saw through the mists the flush of dawn, but he had not the heart enough to follow that gleam. He had settled down to stoic sadness as his own faith waned and unilluminated by humour. Occasionally he forgets himself, as in the poem, "Rugby Chapel," when he thinks of his father and his father's character, then he begins to mount as with wings of an eagle, and he thinks of man travelling through his foes toward the city of God, and then sounds the note of triumph:

On to the bound of the waste,
On to the city of God.

Though Clough was as much a child of his age, and finally a mirror of it as Arnold, there was not the sad undertone in his work. He was a true literary artist, but his art is mainly valuable, not for its own sake, but for its transparency as a medium of large, self-revelation. He finds himself in the midst of a conflict, many call it of "science and religion." He, however, has one clear aim—that of getting out of the storm, if possible, into some bright light and quiet air." But he will only do this honestly and truthfully. That truth is, he believes, and he sets himself to work his way to it, through the confusions of his day, and the tangled forest of life. He was one of many of that day.

It fortifies my soul to know,
 That though I perish, truth is so,
 That howso'er I stray and range,
 Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change;
 I steadier step when I recall
 That if I slip Thou dost not fall.

Such men come to their season of clear shining. Clough not only thought but lived. He was a full-blooded man as well as an eager questioner. Though the poet of intellectual suspense, and would have none of the hypocricies of faith, neither would he have any of the hypocrises of scepticism. He it is who sings of the higher courage. He feels that honest struggle is never vain.

Say not the struggle naught availeth,
 The labour and the wounds are vain;
 The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
 And as things have been they remain.

There are many in our land whose national pride gathers about our industrial development and material prosperity, but do not realize that gold may be bought too dearly. Some in our land with great souls, some of our poets, looked upon our industrial development with some misgiving, as they saw the countrysides being deserted, and saw our industrial towns developing without any idea of beauty or comfort. They saw ugly towns springing up, and many fair landscapes blighted. John Ruskin raged about it, but all to no purpose. There are minds and souls to whom beauty is as the heavenly manna, and while our industrialism was growing by leaps and bounds, and so many things made subservient to it, these people looked on with pain in their hearts, knowing that along that pathway, lasting peace and joy were not to be found. Some who cried like Keats, "My world is disenchanted. When shall I find loveliness? Where does beauty sleep? *There* is the healing of humanity; there is truth."

Among these was Wm. Morris among the poets. It was what Morris saw around him, and saw also what we had lost in our scramble for gold and industrial supremacy that drove him to the past to find themes for his songs. He refused to live in all this ugliness and decay of beauty. Figuratively he closed his eyes to it. He had too much vitality within him, to endure the exhaustion of passion and beauty which characterized much of the society of his day. He became sick of the theological and political squabbles, felt little or no sympathy with the critical or revolutionary movements of his time—not even with 1848—flung off his shoulders, and drove from him with a laugh, the whole atmosphere of the time, and went as it were

round the corner, to live and move and have his being in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Some might say, "Wm. Morris, then, could be no interpreter of his age, when he left it and took others trooping away with him, some artists and some poets." But think a little, and what a light his action throws on the England of that day. It means that some of the finer elements of life were suffering for lack of sustenance, some of the finer souls could find no bread in a land of material plenty. There was something missing in those bustling days, and this man, and others like him, went out in search of the lost treasures, but only that they might bring them back again. Poetry was only one of the gifts Wm. Morris gave to the people of England. There is scarcely a room in the Palace Beautiful he has not decorated. He was not content to live wholly in the past, "He came to live in the faith and hope of a better future; and in that most imaginative of books, *News from Nowhere*, he painted what England might become a century or two hence under a new régime, the foundation of which was the universal prevalence among the people, of intelligent joy in the work of their hands." He sang beautifully of these things as well as worked, and set others working. For a while it seemed as though he laboured in vain, but at last he was recognized by those with seeing eyes, that he was an interpreter of the needs of his age, and an enricher of its Faith and Hope and Love.

Much of the structure of modern poetry it is difficult to understand, but in the poetry itself you have the spirit of revolt and adventure which characterize modern life. Rhyme has almost gone and alas, much of the noble rhythm, but much of this, like jazz music, reminds one of Jonah's gourd, which "came up in a night and perished in a night." The horrors of the war and the succeeding years of chaos, may have shattered many of the old ideals of beauty, and all our mechanical developments have dimmed our vision to the recognition of human energy; but the struggles of life have gained a new interest, the hopes and aspirations of the humble have become the themes of the singers of to-day. Every new age has its new poetry, has its own music. Great social events, great changes in the life of society such as are now taking place, affect the life in all its branches, and literature, is no exception. Social and literary changes go together, but the poet will still be the interpreter, and "poetry will resume her sacred office of prophecy, and the poets of the present time, groping for some new form, will act as forerunners of a future poet, to restore the beauty of harmony."

MORTON GLEDHILL.