

CHAPTER XXVII

NOTE ON SOME FRENCH ROMANTICS

I HAD hoped, in the latter part of the term, to give a lecture upon the relation between the English and the French romantic movement; but there will not be time to treat the subject except in the briefest possible way. However, these few notes should be of some use to you. Every student, of course, should be aware that the great movements in modern literature have never been confined to one country only. The romantic movement of which we have been treating in its relation to English literature, really extended over all Europe. It represented a change not merely in English literature, but in Occidental literature. Every country influenced every other, and each was influenced by all. The benefit of the change effected in France was extended speedily to England and to Germany; and England in turn gave both to German and to French literature the benefits of its own literary reform. The most brilliant of all the romantic movements was certainly the French; and England owes more to French influence than to any other. It has always been so. The English classical literature of the eighteenth century was modelled upon French classic literature. The English romances of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had their counterparts in France; nor was it until the huge French romances had been translated into English that the English work developed an original character of its own. Go back yet farther, to the Middle Ages proper, and you will find English literature equally, if not more, indebted to France. And finally you must remember that in the eleventh century French became the language of England and long continued to be. Although originally springing from strangely different sources, the

English and the French languages have so interacted upon each other that English and French literatures are more closely related than any other two literatures of Europe.

The French romantic movement, like the English, was a gradual development; we can trace it well back into the eighteenth century, and should do so if there were time. Suffice now to say that the blossoming of this movement began about the same time that English romanticism had its triumphs, just about the time when Tennyson was beginning to make himself felt. There were before that French poets of original and beautiful talent, who corresponded somewhat in the history of romanticism to our earlier romantics, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Scott. But the real triumph began in the early thirties—between 1830 and 1834, let us say—though Victor Hugo's "Orientales" appeared as early as 1829. There is one thing, however, worth noticing—that with a solitary exception, that of Dumas, nearly all of the great romantics were born just about the beginning of the century, 1802, 1804, up to 1811. Even Dumas came very nearly being born in the nineteenth century, for his date is 1799.

I do not think the French romantic movement was so much superior to the English in poetry as in prose; indeed, the matter is very disputable, and if we grant the French superiority, it is rather because of the finer qualities of their language than because of higher qualities of thought or feeling. To the student in this country, moreover, the poetical part of the movement is the least likely to appeal. I do not know that it would do you any more good to read the French romantic poets than to read the great English romantic poets. The English poets will furnish you with quite as many ideas and sentiments. But the French poetry was of a totally different order—much more passionate, warm, musical and brightly coloured than the average of English romantic poetry. And it was more perfect as to form; the English language is not capable of producing verses of such jewelled splendours as the "Émaux et Camées"

of Théophile Gautier. For this reason, perhaps, it may be rather to your interest to give your first attention to French poetry. I shall, however, make this lecture deal chiefly with the story-tellers among the French romantics, and their peculiarities as masters of style.

There are a number of names to be mentioned, but most of these can be classed under two heads. You will remember that in our English Victorian and pre-Victorian epochs there were two remarkably different styles in use, and that these two styles continue to prevail. There is an ornate or highly romantic style; and there is the severe style, simple as anything in classic literature, or even more simple,—without any ornament, and yet with extraordinary power of touching the emotions. In French literature we find the very same thing. But a curious terminology was invented to describe these differences in French style; and it is so queer, so easy to remember, that I am going to use it in this lecture. The writers of very ornate prose, like Gautier and Hugo, have been called myopic stylists—men who wrote as if they were myopic, very near-sighted, seeing things in all their details very closely, and so able to describe every little item. But writers of the other style, like Mérimée, were called presbyopic or far-sighted stylists—describing as if they saw clearly at vast distances, but did not distinguish small things in their immediate neighbourhood.

The great names, of course, are Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Sainte-Beuve, Théophile Gautier, Alexandre Dumas, Honoré de Balzac, Prosper Mérimée and 'George Sand' (Armandine Lucile Dudevant)—in the first group. Of Sainte-Beuve, the greatest critic who ever lived, I have already spoken, and of his influence upon English criticism; he need be mentioned here only as an infallible guide. Without reading him no one can hope to form a correct taste in French literature.

Victor Hugo's name and work is so well known that we need treat of him very briefly. And the same may be said of Alexandre Dumas, the nearest French approach to our

British Sir Walter Scott, though far surpassing Scott in fantastic imagination. As to Balzac, who is not particularly a stylist, we need remark only that he attempted successfully the immense feat of describing the whole of French life, and the conditions of every class of society, in a vast succession of novels, nearly all of which are linked together, so that the characters in one story re-appear in another—the whole representing some fifty-two volumes.

‘George Sand,’ who in all respects resembles the English George Eliot, was especially a writer of passionate love stories; she does not figure as a stylist, for her books will not bear the test of being twice read with pleasure. A book that you cannot read twice with a feeling of pleasure has no style. But although not a stylist, and now a little wearisome to read, this woman really founded a great school of romantic novel writing, which continues to this day. The styles of the group are best represented in the persons of Théophile Gautier, and of Prosper Mérimée,—the former being the most decorative of all French stylists, and the latter the least decorative and the most severe. As for Victor Hugo I am not going to say much about him, for the reasons already given; in his way he was quite as ornamental as any one else, but only in a way. His style is incomparably more irregular than that of Carlyle; it is rather an idiosyncrasy than a style. To tempt you to study these writers I should recommend their short stories as better than their long ones for a beginning, and I shall speak particularly of these. But such writers as Alfred de Musset and Balzac also wrote short stories, some of which may be advantageously mentioned as representative of the second great style referred to. To sum up first: Victor Hugo represented the Gothic spirit of the movement, best exemplified in his terrible mediæval story of “Notre-Dame.” De Musset, with some classic tendencies, gives us in his prose tales a light delicacy and grace of narrative that almost belongs as much to the eighteenth as to the nineteenth century. Gautier, the second greatest power in the movement—he

could produce more perfect poetry than even Victor Hugo—is also the greatest of all French masters of rich style; I should remind you that he was also the historian of the romantic movement, which he recorded in a charming series of studies entitled “Histoire du Romantisme.” Alexandre Dumas represents the novel of incident. Balzac takes a place apart, for his innovation was something entirely original. Mérimée, both historian and story-teller, resembles our English Froude in more ways than one. And ‘George Sand’ was the mother of that endless series of novels of passion—illegitimate passion rather than legitimate—which have not yet ceased to pour from the Parisian press.

Gautier I shall speak of first. He was a charming man and a very great scholar, and something of his character as well as of his scholarship accounts for the extraordinary beauty of his work. He was one of the few great journalists who never wrote an unkind word about any man, although he attacked parties and principles which he considered wrong. He proclaimed the doctrine of art for art’s sake—the creation or reflection of beauty as the chief object of art. His knowledge of Greek thought and feeling particularly influenced his artistic doctrine; unless the subject were beauty, he would not touch it. In this he differed very much from Hugo, who delighted in the horrible and the grotesque. One of his eccentricities is worth mentioning; his chief pleasure was the reading of the dictionary, and it was his custom to ask any young aspirant for literary honours, “Do you like to read dictionaries?” If the young man said, “Yes,” they were friends; if he said, “No,” Gautier suspected that he would never become a sincere lover of art. Most certainly it was by the study of dictionaries that Gautier became a veritable magician of style, but it does not follow that the same method succeeds in all cases. It succeeded with him not only because he was a genius, but because he had had the very best classical training, and he put it to the most romantic use. We have nothing in English at all like his books—there is nobody to compare with

him. You must try to remember just these two things about him—that he chose only subjects which he thought beautiful and heroic, and that he treated them in a most exquisite way. But his aesthetics were not narrow; beauty of any kind attracted him, no matter to what age or part of the world it might belong. Do you remember the story of De Quincey about the Spanish nun? The subject is a strange one—that of a woman becoming a soldier and a swordsman, distinguished for force, courage, and beauty—a very romantic subject. Besides the Spanish story there is a story in French history of a lady named de Maupin who actually fought duels with the sword. How charming the story of a woman in man's clothes can be made, Shakespeare has given us more than one supreme example; you will remember "Twelfth Night," for example, and "As You Like It." Out of these three elements Gautier composed his famous "Mademoiselle de Maupin," the story of a woman in man's clothes, who has all kinds of amorous adventures. Perhaps there was also some inspiration from the old Italian writers, such as Boccaccio. Certainly the book was immoral. But it was also very beautiful, and it was written especially as a defiance to conventions. Gautier himself was the most moral of men; but he fought against any restrictions upon literature, either of religion or convention. And he succeeded, he broke down the bars. But it was in his short stories perhaps that he proved himself greatest. There are several volumes of these. The best two are simply entitled "Romans et Contes," and "Nouvelles." The greatest of all romantic short stories in French literature is probably "La Morte Amoureuse," and that you will find in one of these volumes. It is a vampire story—the story of a dead woman who comes in the night to suck the blood of a lover, whom she keeps in a state of magical illusion. Such a subject can be very horrible, but Gautier made it very beautiful. Quite as remarkable, I think, is the story of "Arria Marcella", telling of the coming back from the dead, through the power of passion, of a woman

buried for thousands of years. The beauty of this story is especially in the artistic resurrection of the life of Pompeii; and very considerable archæological knowledge was required to write it. Another wonderful little story is called "Le Pied de Momie," or "The Mummy's Foot"; it deals with the life of ancient Egypt. A man who has the dried foot of a female mummy purchased as a curio, wishes he could see, as in life, the person to whom that foot once belonged; and she comes to him out of the night of five thousand years, and brings him under ground to the assembly of her ancestors, myriads of dead kings and princes. A fourth story treats of a subject well known in Japanese tradition, the animation of a beloved picture, the picture in this case being embroidered instead of painted. But I cannot tell you more about Gautier's stories in this short lecture: if you will simply take those two volumes and choose for yourselves, you will find what a wonderful writer and story-teller he is. There is but one drawback—his love of extraordinary words; you cannot read his artistic stories without having a dictionary of art at your elbow.

Very different is it with Prosper Mérimée. Gautier loved long rolling sentences, long soft rhythms; he often composed a sentence a page and a half long, just as Ruskin did. But the sentences of Mérimée are all short, clear, crisp, without rhythms, without extraordinary words, and with the use of the fewest possible number of adjectives. No style, except that of the old Norse writers, is so plain and so simple.

It would be hard to say where his style appears to the best advantage—in his histories, in his stories, or in his letters. As for his histories, such as "Les Cosaques d'Autrefois," they read like the best of romances, though nobody could claim that he is in the least defective or inaccurate as an historian. The book upon the great Cossacks is the very best that I know of—perhaps, indeed, the only book that gives you in brief space a clear idea of the old time struggle between Russia and her Tartar conquerors, as well as a history of the marvellous militia, the Cossacks themselves.

The accounts of the cavalry battles are spirited enough almost to lift the reader off his feet. Another strange book of his deals with the famous impostor who pretended to be the legitimate heir to the throne of Russia, and actually succeeded almost in making himself emperor. This is "Les Faux Démétrius" (for there were two of these impostors), and gives such a picture of Russian life in the old time as you will not find in any other single volume. Mérimée liked the Middle Ages, too, and he has given us some wonderful essays upon French history. By the way, you should remember that it was he who helped Napoleon III to write his famous history of Cæsar. But to the mass of readers Mérimée is better known by his wonderful stories—"Carmen," "Colomba," "Tamango," "Mateo Falcone," "La Vénus d'Ille," and so forth. The first mentioned of the above, "Carmen," is the story of a Spanish soldier bewitched by a gipsy girl, for whose sake he becomes a murderer and robber. He kills her at last in prison, on the evening before his execution. A more terrible story, and yet a more touching story, was never written. The book is, moreover, a revelation of certain characteristics of Spanish gipsies. I think you know that it has been made into an opera, the music of which was composed by the great musician Bizet, who represented the romantic movement in music. Those who have heard the Spanish and Havana melodies introduced into this opera will not easily forget them. "Colomba" is the story of a Corsican vendetta. It is a matchless picture of Corsican manners and customs, as full of poetry as they are of ferocity. "Mateo Falcone" is another Corsican story, short and frightful, about a father, who, although an outlaw, kills his little boy for betraying the honour of the family. "Tamango" is the story of a slave ship, founded on fact. The slaves rise in revolt, kill the captain and the crew, and seize the ship; but they do not know how to navigate her, and she drifts about hopelessly until nearly all on board are dead. "La Vénus d'Ille," is the tale of an antique statue, which exerts a ghostly and fatal charm upon its

possessor. I have been selecting only a few titles out of many, and it would be useless perhaps to mention the variety from the Italian, Spanish, German and Russian studies scattered through Mérimée's volumes. For the charm of the man is so very great that if you read only one or two of his tales you can scarcely rest until you have read them all. And a noteworthy fact about Mérimée, which also shows the bent of his taste, is that he is almost the first to introduce European readers to the wonderful merit of the Russian novelists. He first made translations from Gogol and Pushkin, and among his translations from the Russian the most extraordinary thing is the little story entitled "La Dame de Pique" (Queen of Spades), a marvellous narrative about a gambler's life in which a certain fatal card plays a tragical part. There are also to be found in Mérimée things which are not exactly stories—rather studies in realism, which anticipate Maupassant, such as the little piece entitled "L'Enlèvement de la Redoute" (The Capture of the Redout), the narrative of a soldier who helped to storm the fortress. He describes only what he felt and saw, in the simple language of a soldier, and the narrative gives the reader exactly the sensation of having been in the fight.

Gautier must have taught a great deal about style to English writers; Mérimée could only be admired. The Englishman who comes nearest to Mérimée in style is Froude. Mérimée is a much greater artist, writing in a much more perfect language, and I doubt whether any Englishman can ever succeed in producing exactly the same effects. In French, Mérimée had no imitator before Maupassant; and even Maupassant could not surpass him. It is true that the charm of Mérimée is partly due to the strange and exotic character of his subjects, but independently of the subject the method is always supreme. We may say that his was the most realistic of styles, although producing the most romantic effects.

Of the other writers, only a few need be dealt with at some length. The prose of de Musset, the beautiful little

stories of Italian and Parisian life, though romantic in feeling, are written also in a very plain style, approaching that of Mérimée but not equalling it. A better example of his style is in the famous "Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle" (The Confession of a Child of the Age), which is a passionate piece of autobiography. It tells us all the pain and despair and jealousy of a young man betrayed by the woman to whom he was attached, and the man was the author himself, though other names are of course used. One of the female characters in the narrative is supposed to be the famous 'George Sand'. De Musset was her lover for a time, and it appears by his own confession that he was a very difficult man for any woman to live with. But, whatever may be the right or the wrong of the story, there is no doubt about the passionate pathos and the beauty of the book. However, de Musset was not of much influence in French prose. The great influences of the first period were Gautier and Mérimée.

It is possible, of course, for a man to affect literature through stories which do not depend for their immortal merit upon mere style, but upon imagination and suggestion. Now Balzac is one of those who did this. His enormous series of novels did not affect French literature as prose; they served only to establish a new school of fiction. He was not at his best as a stylist in this long chain of interlinked novels, but when he took to writing short stories it was quite a different matter, and some of the short stories must live for all time.

The most famous of all these is "La Peau de Chagrin." I think you know that the word "chagrin" means grief, but it also means a particular preparation of leather for which we use the word "shagreen." The double signification in the title can be best valued through a notion of the story. A young man in a second-hand dealer's shop, finds exposed for sale a curious skin or parchment, covered with magical characters. He wishes to buy it, but is warned by the dealer that if he buys it it will destroy him. It is a magical

skin, and it has this extraordinary property that anybody who possesses it can gratify any wish which he may express. But so soon as the wish is gratified, two things happen—the skin shrinks and becomes much smaller, and the life of the wisher is shortened correspondingly. As you may well suppose, the young man buys the skin and proceeds to gratify a great number of wishes. He wishes to be rich, and he is rich; he wishes for power, and he obtains power; he wishes to have the most beautiful woman in the world, and the beautiful woman becomes his wife. By the time he begins to feel rather satisfied, the skin has become terribly small, and his life is apparently very near an end. Then he discovers that he must absolutely stop wishing for anything in order that he may be able to live a little longer. His physician warns him that he must not think about women at all, not even about his own wife. You can very well imagine the end of the story. One sensual wish comes, the skin disappears, and the life of the man departs. You can see that this is a very great story because of the great moral in it. It is quoted everywhere, and every student should at least remember the title.

Again Balzac produced two volumes of stories entitled “*Les Contes Drolatiques*,” translated into English under the title of “*Droll Stories from the Abbeys of Touraine*.” The English translation, with its 425 illustrations by Doré, is very fair; but it scarcely gives you an idea of the astonishing art of the original, written in the quaint French of the sixteenth century. These stories are certainly of the kind that remain immortal, notwithstanding the strangely immoral character of many of them. They reflect the life of the Middle Ages in all its horror and superstition, but also in all its tenderness and poetry. There are very extraordinary stories. They begin by making you laugh; a little further along they become very sensual, in the worst sense; then all at once they become so intensely human and pathetic as to bring tears to the eyes. Now there are very few stories of that sort in the literature of the world—grotesque,

immoral, comical, human and pathetic. But we feel that the life of the time described was really a life of this kind; the morals were not as now, many of the customs were atrocious, cruelty was the rule rather than an exception in the governing of cities, and yet the emotions of love and heroism and all the tender feelings existed very much as they exist to-day. Feeling this, we cease to find fault with the immoral parts of the story. These only tell the truth about the form of life that has passed away. You have that book in the English translation in the library; and it would be better to read the English version first before trying the French, for the French is of the sixteenth century and requires a little patience to become familiar with.

Another group of romantics came later who also influenced prose literature, though poetry much more. In fact, to be quite accurate, there were three groups; the French romantic movement passed in three great waves; but we need not make the distinction here, because we are not considering poetry, for want of time. The names of the second group especially to be considered are Gérard de Nerval, Louis Bertrand, Charles Baudelaire, Gustave Flaubert. Nerval, a friend of Gautier, figured much later than Gautier as a successful writer. His story is very extraordinary. Undoubtedly he was a little mad, and it is possible that he became mad by reason of a love affair. But he was never too mad to write the most wonderful books. As a mere boy he made a French translation of Goethe's "Faust" which Goethe himself judged to be the best translation in existence. At one time of his life he went to Egypt, declared himself a Mohammedan, adopted the customs of the country, went to the slave market and bought himself a wife. She appears to have been a Turkish girl of very decided character, and as soon as she perceived she had been bought by a madman, she set all laws and customs at defiance by leaving her would-be husband and fleeing to Damascus — at least such is the story. But in spite of this disappointment Nerval obtained plenty of inspiration from his experience in the

East. He travelled as far as Jerusalem, and returned to France to write his wonderful "Scènes de la Vie Orientale," in two volumes, one of the most beautiful books of travel and one of the strangest ever produced. There is contained in it perhaps his masterpiece in the way of romance, the history of King Solomon and of Balkis, the Queen of Sheba. This narrative is quite as grand as anything in "The Arabian Nights." Meyerbeer, the great musician, actually wrote music for it in the hope of producing it operatically upon the stage, before having discovered that no stage could ever be built large enough to produce such a drama. For the author's imagination was enormous; his pictures represented vastness of scenery such as really could be observed only from the tops of the highest mountains. I do not know whether many have found delight in this wonderful story, just because it happens to be in a book of travel. But the other books of Nerval are very well known. The most familiar is "Les Filles de Feu" (Daughters of Fire), terrible characters, you might suppose, but they are very gentle girls indeed. There are four stories each with a woman's name, and each delineating some particular charm of female character. Of course they are very queer, unearthly stories for the most part, but the first is astonishingly human. It is supposed to be the narrative of a damsel of the Middle Ages, who leaves her father's castle secretly in company with an adventurer, and suffers the bitter consequence of her folly. It is very touching, almost like the mediæval stories of Balzac, but very pure and told in a style wonderfully simple. Nerval went through France, learning peasants' songs from the peasants, just as Sir Walter Scott did when preparing his "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border." The result of these pilgrimages was "La Bohème Galante," one of the most delightful books on folksong ever written. The chapter on folk-song is only a part of the book, but it is one of the notable books in French literature, and it had great effect in turning the attention of poets to the value of popular ballads. Miscellaneous works and essays by

Nerval were collected after his death into book form; and you will find charming things in the collection. The best of all is a wonderful short story called "La Main Enchantée," first entitled "La Main de Gloire," the story of a man who by making a particular contract with the devil obtains the gift of irresistible power in his sword arm. The grotesqueness of the fancy should not prejudice you against the story, for the value of the story is quite independent of the theme. It is as a picture of the Middle Ages that the tale is very great. You see that most of these French romantics went to the Middle Ages for their fiction, just as the English Pre-Raphaelites did.

De Nerval, romantic as he was, came by style closer to Mérimée than to Gautier; his method was very plain and very pure. A new kind of prose was, however, on the verge of appearing. This new kind of prose had been attempted in England a little by Blake, and a little by Coleridge, but it was only perfected in France. I mean prose poetry in the full sense of the word.

Louis Bertrand is an important name, though his only famous book, "Gaspard de la Nuit," is now out of print, and difficult to obtain. He died very young and left nothing else of importance. But this little book had very great influence upon French letters. It was a book of prose poems, or, if you like, a volume of prose sketches of the most romantic kind, in which every sentence had the rhythm and quality of poetry, and all the text was divided into paragraphs like the verses of the Bible. Bertrand played very much the same part in French literature as Macpherson did, with his Ossian, in England in the latter part of the previous century. There is no evidence of exactly to what extent Bertrand was influenced by Ossian, of which a prose translation was then very popular in France, but it is probable that he was to some degree inspired by it. Bertrand's book did not attract much attention with the public, but men of letters saw its merit, and the poet Baudelaire seized upon the suggestion which it offered for the creation of a

new kind of prose. The value of Bertrand was really the impulse which he gave to Baudelaire.

Charles Baudelaire, an eccentric and perhaps slightly mad man of letters, you have perhaps heard of as a poet. He wrote the most extraordinary volume of poetry called "Fleurs du Mal" (Flowers of Evil), and the book is not badly described by its title. As poetry, in regard to form, nothing better was produced by any romantic, but the subjects were most horrible, dealing with crimes and with remorse, despair and other unhealthy emotions. There was also a strange sensualism in the book, something quite exotic and new. But we are now dealing chiefly with Baudelaire as a prose writer, and you should know that he was quite as great in prose as in verse. He was also a great translator—translating into French the best of De Quincey and of Edgar Poe. He himself had very much of the imagination of Poe, but it did not take the form of strange stories. Instead of writing stories, he wrote very short romantic sketches, each representing some particular mood, experience or sorrow. And these, which he collected into one volume, under the title of "Petits Poèmes en Prose," represented the influence of Bertrand. But Baudelaire was much greater than Bertrand. He showed, as never has been shown before, the extraordinary resources of the French language in prose of poetical form. A year ago I translated for you one of these prose studies, a little composition about the moon, and you may remember what a strange thing it was. The new poetical prose was fairly established by the publication of this book. But such prose was not adapted to the writing of novels and long stories. It could only be used for very short studies of a highly emotional character. French men of letters have since been using the style only for such purposes, and perhaps the most striking follower of Baudelaire in this regard was the historian and scholar Edgar Quinet, whose wonderful bit of prose poetry about a cathedral, "La Cathédrale," you will find in Professor Saintsbury's "Specimens of French Literature."

Yet another kind of prose was attempted by Gustave Flaubert, the greatest of the second romantic group. He was very much influenced by both Gautier and Baudelaire, and he tried to invent a style that would combine both forms of excellence—that is, would give all the effect of the ornate prose of Gautier and of the melodious prose of Baudelaire. He therefore especially attempted the study of words in themselves, classing them according to colours, tones, qualities of hardness or softness; and he attempted to combine them into a musical mosaic of a new sort. In this he was only partially successful. There are two mistakes in the attempt to create such a style. The first is that the highest ornate results of it could only be understood by a few scholarly men of letters; its merits never could appeal to the public. The other mistake is due to the supposition that the same word will necessarily produce the same effect upon all cultured minds. Now, as a matter of fact, this is the mistake still shared by that modern class of small eccentric French poets called Decadents. The same word will not produce the same effect upon differently cultivated minds. On the contrary, the same word is likely to make a distinctly different impression upon nine hundred out of a thousand minds; for the impression produced will depend upon the mental experience of the reader, which is never the same in any two individuals. Some words there are, as Gautier well knew, which will produce extraordinary effects upon large classes of minds, but that is because such words make an appeal to certain fundamental feelings which are common to the mass of healthy imaginations. Flaubert's theory was wrong, but as he was a great genius, he could not be altogether wrong, but he gave the world a variety of new suggestions, as well as a prose scarcely less ornate than Gautier's, but with an irregular charm of a new kind. He broke down traditional conventions of form as boldly as did Carlyle in England. But he was wise enough to perceive that the same kind of prose would not suit all kinds of literary productions, and he did a great service to letters by

writing in three different styles, thus showing how plain or poetical or decorative prose was adapted to different subjects. He thought that the plain prose was especially suited to the novel of real life, and in this style he wrote his great realistic story, "Madame Bovary." He thought that an irregular, fantastic, highly coloured prose was best suited to romance of an exotic character, and in this style he wrote his "Salammbô," which is a story of ancient Carthage; also his wonderful "Trois Contes," three short stories of extraordinary merit as literature. Finally he had an idea that dreams, visions, speculations, notions of the supernatural world, could best be treated in poetical prose; and he wrote his "Tentation de Saint Antoine" in the style of Baudelaire's prose poems. This is a wonderful book, in dramatic form; all the gods, all the religions, all the philosophies that ever existed in the world appear in it, each being described in an utterance of a few lines, like a strain of music. Besides these books, Flaubert wrote a number of novels, not so good. His great novel, "L'Éducation Sentimentale," is not readable; it is a tiresome failure. But his "Bouvard et Pécuchet," the most terrible satire upon human folly ever written since the days of Jonathan Swift, is worth reading, and if read, it can never be forgotten. Bouvard and Pécuchet are two bachelors of means, who resolved to pass their lives in the endeavour to master some science, and to make people as happy as possible. One after another, medicine, law, botany, and other sciences are studied and abandoned, because the deeper problems underlying the sciences are never properly treated by the teachers of them, and because of the hypocrisy and sham connected with them. As for trying to make people happy, their experiences with the adoption of a child and some adventures with the other sex cure them of their faith in the goodness of human nature. Though no book was ever more funny to read, no book was ever written which leaves so sad an impression upon the reader.

The greatest followers of Flaubert in his attempt at a

fantastic style were the eccentric novelists known as the brothers Goncourt. These men dealt chiefly with the lives of artists; and in that direction their "tormented style" seems to harmonize a little with the subject. But they carried it to such an extravagant extent that they sometimes became unintelligible. The great novelist, Alphonse Daudet, often compared with the English Dickens, though he might be more justly compared with Thackeray, was also considerably influenced by Flaubert. At this period novelists began to swarm; I need not mention more names because I am only tracing the history of a movement. But in approaching the third and last period of French nineteenth century literature, I may call your attention to the remarkable fact that the great romantic Flaubert was the literary father of the greatest realist who ever lived, greater even than Mérimée—Guy de Maupassant. This is good proof of Flaubert's value as a teacher. He understood in what direction the young man's strength lay, and he bade him cultivate that. Regularly, for years, Maupassant used to bring him work to criticize, and as regularly Flaubert insisted that the work should be thrown into the fire. One knows not whether to admire more the patient severity of the master or the heroic submission of the pupil. The result justified the means.

And now while speaking of that result, a word about another movement in the direction of realism. Its chief apostle, Zola, called it "Naturalism." It had really no other father, and no other really great representative. Zola's theory was that life should be depicted exactly as it is, not only with natural truth, but with scientific truth; and that all the things which it is usually called wrong to write about, ought to be written about without shame. He pretends to follow the scientific method of Comte, which is not really a true scientific method; but what he did follow with more success was the scientific teaching of inherited character. Like Balzac, he conceived a vast series of novels, each of them forming a chapter in the history of a simple family,

Les Rougon-Macquart; and he showed how the result of some one vice in the life of an ancestor spread moral and physical misery through the lives of generations. No matter what critics may say—justly say—about Zola's immorality, filthiness, shamelessness, there can be no question of his genius. He is a very great artist. But he is a great artist not because he is a realist, or a naturalist, as he wished to be called; he is a great artist because in spite of all his theories, he is really a romantic—a man whose imagination is enormous and lurid, and perceives in exaggerated form all the horrible side of human existence. He is a romancer of vice, of foulness, of selfishness, of all the cruel passions and beastly follies that civilization produces. His realism lies only in the fact that he uses notes as they never were used before. For example, in one novel he tells about everything in the life of railways, everything about engines, about coaling, about the qualities of boilers used; in another novel he tells everything about the lives of boys and girls, men and women, working in a great dry-goods shop, and he explains all the thousand details of business. So far he taught realism, or at least realistic methods, even better than Charles Reade did in England. But he could not use his facts in a purely realistic way; his colossal imagination distorted and exaggerated. That was the reason why his followers—he once had a school—dropped away from him one after another. The naturalistic school is dead; only Zola lives, and he lives because of an individual genius which is not naturalistic at all. At one time Maupassant wrote under his direction, producing two or three marvelous stories that astonished the world. Everybody saw that Maupassant was greater than Zola; but everybody said, "This is not naturalism, this is realism; this brings us back to the days of Prosper Mérimée." Very soon Maupassant left the shadow of Zola, and worked for himself, and became the greatest story-teller that the European world has ever seen.

I have spoken of Maupassant before; you know that he

represents the purest realism and the simplest style. You have seen that the movement in France of prose has been a good deal like the movement in England. If we except the extreme forms in French prose—the prose poetry of Baudelaire and the so-called naturalism of Zola—the movements are very much alike. In both countries two kinds of prose struggled for the mastery, the ornate kind and the simple kind. In both countries the great masters have proved that with a simple style all the effects of an ornate style can be produced. In both countries the tendency seems to be toward sobriety of style. But the French remain a little in advance of the more conservative English; they have learned the teaching of Flaubert. That teaching, put into its simplest form, is this: “Change your style to suit your subject.” Undoubtedly his advice represents the ultimate truth, which Englishmen must accept at a later day. The same kind of style does not suit all possible subjects. Every style has a particular relative value of its own; and the efforts of different schools, even the follies and extravagances of them, have been of lasting service to the evolution of literary knowledge.