

## GREAT VICTORIAN PROSE

## OUTSIDE OF FICTION

One more department of Victorian literature remains to be treated—the higher prose, *i.e.* the prose of the essay, of history, of elegant criticism,—as distinguished from the light prose of story-telling. Two of the great masters of prose have already been mentioned, — Macaulay and Carlyle. Altogether, there were only four very great masters of prose in the 19th century; —I mean writers of such quality as to be able to influence the entire English language. Those four were Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Froude. We have still to notice Ruskin and Froude;—both belonging to the Victorian era, while their great predecessors belonged to an earlier period.

But besides these two very great names, a number of names representing lesser influences require mentioning. For example, there were Matthew Arnold as an essayist, Pater as an essayist and historian, Symonds as an essayist and historian: all these three influenced English literature very considerably. If I were to divide this course of lectures more minutely—if I were allowed more time for the work,—I should probably follow the example set by the great critics of classing History, Scholarship and Science, separately. But, for obvious reasons I shall not attempt it; and I shall group all great prose writers together who have affected English literature outside of fiction. Many English historians have no relation at all with literature in this respect. Freeman has none, Green has none — while Froude has a great deal. In science, the influence upon thought of writers like Darwin and philosophers like Spencer has been vast; it has indeed affected all European thinking—the whole of civilization. Yet these great names do not belong to literature in the intimate sense that the name of Huxley and the name of Tyndall belong to it; for the two latter men were wonderful masters of style, each representing an entirely different school of expression. Scholarship, pure and simple, has

scarcely affected literature to any degree during the Victorian epoch; for the great scholars mostly occupy themselves with the matters of classic research, philological research, and comparative linguistics. It is only when the scholar enters the field of literature proper as a translator of a poet or of some great classic, that we can consider him in this relation. For example, I doubt whether there is any greater English philologist than Professor Skeat; and no other one has done half so much for English etymology. The wonderful work of this man had changed the whole art of dictionary-making—completely revolutionizing it. Indirectly his influence on English language can scarcely be estimated in words; and he has given us admirable work on Middle English writers and Old English texts. But in spite of his influence upon language, we cannot exactly consider him as a creator in literature. On the whole the scholars of the period have been busy chiefly with the dead material of language rather than with the living art of it; and we need not trouble about them.

In the department of criticism—which is the scholarship of literature, as distinguished from scholarship of the deeper kind—matters are very different. Immense advance has been made in literary criticism: it has ceased to be a mere science;—it has become the most delicate of arts. Now a very curious fact to bear in mind is this:—Although literary criticism exacts a great deal of classical scholarship,—although no man can be a great literary critic who is not also a man of much classical knowledge,—no department of literature has been more influenced by the romantic movement. The literary critic of to-day must be above all prejudices of schools. He must understand every school; but he must also be able to sympathize equally well with classic and romantic, with realism and idealism, with the creators of poetical prose and the makers of classical verse, with the most elaborate lyrical poetry and also with the natural poetry that may be contained in the commonest street ballad. Such criticism is indeed very different from the criticism of the 18th century,—very different even from the criticism of the time of Macaulay. Macaulay would

be considered incompetent as a critic in certain directions to-day. Nobody would deny his authority in matters of classical form; but nobody would trust him to judge outside of a certain narrow circle. In the latter part of the 18th century, and even in the early part of the 19th, criticism was still regarded as a classical science, governed by fixed rules, and judging by immovable standards. To-day criticism is very much more simply defined. It is only, as Professor Saintsbury has boldly declared, the judicious exercise of "good taste." And the expression "good taste"—as meaning the power to discern what is good in literature—is not now restricted by any conventional ideas of school. You will find Professor Saintsbury equally careful and just in his estimate of a street song or of a Latin hymn. Subject and method are not any longer placed within any restriction, — except those established by human moral experience. You must not offend the deeper moral instincts of men; but otherwise you are free to write whatever you please; and if you have any ability, that ability is sure to be recognized by competent judges. This change of critical opinion, this enlargement of critical methods, has certainly been due to French influence for the most part. Great English criticism after Macaulay dates from Sainte-Beuve, whose first strong English pupil was Matthew Arnold. Sainte-Beuve, the greatest critic of the 19th century, and perhaps the greatest critic that ever lived, may be said to have founded a school: the most generous, and yet also the most rational school of criticism ever produced. He considered that an author's work ought not to be judged merely by pre-existing standard, but much more in relation to the environment and the personality of the man. Why does a man write in such a way? Partly because he has a particular character, different from that of other men; — partly because his life is influenced by causes unlike those influencing the lives of writers before him; — partly because he feels impelled to express the new thoughts, or the chief thoughts of his own time. Therefore, in order to judge a book properly, Sainte-Beuve taught that it was first necessary to learn all about the writer of it—his ancestry, his education, his circumstances,

and his particular character;—secondly to understand all about the history of his literary life, what he read, what companions he had, what pleasures he enjoyed, what philosophy he knew;—and thirdly, it was necessary to know what was his relation to the society of the time at large, what relation his life bore to the general life of the time, what political interests he supported, what ethical or social reforms or antagonism he represented. By this system the duties of a critic became enormously expanded. It was not enough to be a good classical scholar, and to sit down at a desk to judge of a book by the standards of Greek and Latin learning. It was much more necessary to understand history—the social, ethical and political history of the period, as well as the literary history. Only by such knowledge could an author's position be judged. But there was something still more important which it was necessary for the critic to do; he had to be able to sympathize with beauty in every form, to lift himself above all prejudices—religious, social, or political,—and to remain superior to all feelings of class distinction. Thus it not only required immense knowledge to become a good critic; it also required a very fine form of character, with great capacities of sympathy, tolerance, and impartiality. The demand was vast. But the results of the new methods as shown by Sainte-Beuve were incomparably beyond all that had been attempted before. Sainte-Beuve made the authors whom he criticized live again for us in his pages: he was more than photograph-souled; he reproduced all the colours and fine shapes of special characters, explained motives, excused their faults, taught us to love them as well as to understand them. He also effected a great change in the ethics of criticism. In the 18th century criticism really signified a searching for faults. The method of Sainte-Beuve taught it to be the first duty of a critic to search for beauties,—a much more difficult thing to do. It is incomparably harder to explain why a thing is beautiful than to explain why it is ugly. As for himself, he showed a strong disinclination to criticize faults; and in the case of a book in which the faults greatly outweigh the merits, he preferred to say nothing. And this is

really a wise way of doing. It is only a good book that is worth studying and writing about—or at least a book with some good in it. There has never again appeared in European literature quite so great a critic as Sainte-Beuve; he was personally an astonishing genius. Furthermore Sainte-Beuve was essentially French in his artistic feeling and his method—so French that no English critic could easily tread in his footsteps. But all the best contemporary English criticism may be said to derive from Sainte-Beuve; and we shall have to consider at least four names of great living critics in our closing review of Victorian prose.

Now to return from this summary to the subject of the great prose masters themselves, we have first to speak of Froude and Ruskin. These two are the chiefs of the Victorian prose, just as Macaulay and Carlyle were the chiefs of the pre-Victorian period. Observe one interesting fact:—as Macaulay represented classic style, and Carlyle romantic style in the pre-Victorian period, so Froude represents classic style, and Ruskin romantic style in the Victorian period. Thus of the four greatest prose writers of the 19th century, two were romantics and two classics. As for the romantics, they carried prose to the utmost possible degree of ornate perfection. But the two great classic writers are neither of them classical in the sense of the 18th century meaning of the word. Even classicism felt the romantic south-wind of the epoch and broke into beautiful blossom. The colours were not violent and splendidly dazzling, like the flowers of the romantic garden: you can call them white, if you please. But classical prose certainly flowered, became warm, became sympathetic, became capable of thrilling the emotions almost like romantic prose. Macaulay stirs us; Froude enthuses us. It is impossible to deny that both are classic. But, compared with their prose, the prose of the 18th century reads as coldly as an inscription cut in the marble of a tombstone. What is the reason of this? Certainly the reason is only that Macaulay and Froude lived in a freer atmosphere than the men of the 18th century. It is not that they used very different words, or constructed their sentences according

to different rules;—it is because they felt free to express their feelings, their sentiments. The 18th century classicism insisted upon the suppression of personal feeling quite as much as it insisted upon a choice of words or a form of a sentence. Remaining classical by culture and by tendency, Macaulay and Froude were more happily situated. The romantic spirit of their time allowed them liberty to express their emotion; and they did so, with prodigious force.

### FROUDE

We shall first consider Froude<sup>1</sup> whom Professor Saintsbury very plainly declares to have been, even as a historian, “infinitely greater” than either of his contemporaries, Freeman or Green. I need not explain to you that the professor means history as literature,—not history as compilation. I need not tell you much about Froude’s career. He was at Oxford with Newman, Freeman, Pusey, and many others whose names figured in the story of the great Oxford Movement. He studied for the Church and took orders. But at Oxford he became very much agitated by the excitement of the time,—the struggle between the new liberalism and the old religious conservatism. I am not sure whether you know how violent that intellectual contest really was; but you can imagine something about it from the fact that conservatives like Pusey actually wished to check free thought by legislation. The scientific discoveries of the time had produced a sort of spiritual panic—as I told you before, several of the more devotionally inclined went over to the Church of Rome—such as Newman. For the others there were only two courses open: either to keep with the conservative party or to throw in their chances with the new liberalism. Freeman kept with the conservative. Froude left the Church altogether, after publishing a little book called *The Nemesis of Faith*,<sup>2</sup> —Nemesis, I need scarcely tell you, is the

<sup>1</sup> James Anthony Froude (1818-1894).

<sup>2</sup> 1849.

Greek name of the goddess of vengeance, and has come to signify vengeance in the language of scholars. In the little book Froude confessed very plainly his inability to side further with religious conservatism. For this bold action he was persecuted during the remainder of his life. Freeman, afterwards the famed historian, was especially his enemy; and as Froude had professionally chosen the same subject of study as Freeman—history—Freeman was able to do him a great deal of harm. The influence of the university as well as of society was used against him. His old companions refused to speak to him. I think you have all read Green's history of England—a very good little history, as it goes. But very probably you do not know that the success of that history over here in far-away Japan was chiefly brought about by the hatred of Froude. In order to injure his history as much as possible, all the educational society, and all the social machinery, and all the university machinery pushed Green into temporary success. At one time Froude had not even the money to buy a breakfast. Some of his old university friends (it is supposed) secretly came to his help, sending him the sum of four hundred pounds, to help him for the time being. But such was the feeling against Froude that the names of the persons who sent the money never were known to Froude himself. That help was quite sufficient for a man with such knowledge, such genius, and such determination. With quiet courage he kept to work,—producing his great *History of England*,<sup>1</sup> his wonderful *Short Studies on Great Subjects*<sup>2</sup> and a long succession of historical works and essays which we shall speak of later on. And in spite of prejudices, in spite of the anger which his *History* aroused in the Roman Catholic party, in spite of the social prejudices, in spite of everything, his work succeeded. He made money. He became a power in the world of letters,—editor of a leading magazine,—independent of want. Later on he so far conquered opposition, that he obtained an appointment as Professor of History in his University. This was a remarkable

<sup>1</sup> 1856-70.

<sup>2</sup> Four series. 1850-81.

case of the conquest of opposition. But I need scarcely tell you that Froude always had enemies; and that his memory has its detractors even now.

In regard to the wonderful position which he took in English history—such as his championship of Henry VIII from the moral point of view—the work of Froude is open to discussion. And when in his life of *Cæsar*<sup>1</sup> he concluded by comparing Cæsar with Jesus Christ, and leaving the reader very much under the impression that Cæsar was the greater man in all respects, religious people were not likely to judge the book impartially. There will always be a great deal in Froude for theologians and historians to quarrel over. But when it comes to the question of literature, there is no possibility of discussion. We have here the very greatest master of pure English, severe English, and the very greatest artist in the use of that English, that appeared during the Victorian epoch.

The style is perhaps the most wonderful style of the 19th century,—considering the manner of its application. It is extraordinarily simple. And yet it has every quality belonging to the greatest style. I called your attention before to the distinguishing excellence of Macaulay's style: its clearness. Even a child can understand it. But Macaulay's style is ornate—deals in every classical and rhetorical artifice, especially the antithesis. Froude uses no ornament whatever; his language flows on limpidly as the water, and as colourlessly. And yet every effect of colour is produced by it—just as a pure stream mirrors everything above it or upon its banks. Again it has all the persuasiveness of Macaulay's method, which has scarcely any rival in persuasiveness. Finally Froude can do something which Macaulay could not do—except, perhaps, in his *Lays of Ancient Rome*—fill us with enthusiasm. This pure cold style resembles, as I have said, a flowing of water; but it has the “strength of wine.” There is only one other writer of history capable of arousing equal enthusiasm;—and that was Carlyle, especially in his *French Revolution*. No doubt Froude was, in regard to thinking, a pupil of Carlyle; he learned to worship

<sup>1</sup> *Caesar*; a sketch 1879.

heroes as Carlyle worshipped them; and he learned from Carlyle how to judge a hero without paying the least attention to conventional opinions about the man. But Carlyle obtained many of his effects by romantic devices of language; and Froude uses no devices at all. He writes as simply as if he were writing for little children: it is like boys talking to you. Nothing looks so easy as this plain English; and nothing is so difficult to write. That is why Froude will always remain a very great literary master.

Something more than a literary master also—for he teaches us, as Carlyle taught us before him, how to approach questions in a perfectly independent spirit. Both of these men acted very much upon the principle taught by the great German thinker Goethe. If anybody said to Goethe that such and such a thing must be true, “because everybody says so,” Goethe would answer—“Except me: I do not say so because I cannot think so. A thing is not true merely because it seems true to other people: unless it also seems true to me, I hold that it cannot be true.” Carlyle, for example, set his faith against two great popular misconceptions of men, in the case of the prophet Mahomet, and in the case of Cromwell. Since he wrote, no well-informed person would call Mahomet an imposter, or Cromwell a tyrant. Froude went even further than Carlyle, and in great many different directions. I need only to mention one. It had been the custom of all historians to speak of Henry VIII of England as a monster of lust and cruelty. As Henry had been the great enemy of the Roman Catholic power in the latter period of his reign, it was but natural that Roman Catholic historians should have spoken bitterly of him. But Protestant historians have been quite as severe in their judgment, and some of them even more severe. Froude felt quite convinced that Henry VIII was not a bad man in the direction commonly indicated,—the direction of sensualism. It was not an argument to aver that he had a number of wives in succession, and that he had quarrelled with Rome because of the refusal of the Pope to permit a divorce, which would enable him to marry another woman. The private life of Henry VIII by comparison with the private

lives of other kings was pure. Monarchs in these times and up to the end of the 18th century were apt to indulge in a great many irregularities which Henry VIII had not indulged in. He had had many wives, but only one wife at a time; while other kings who had only one wife, were known to have kept innumerable mistresses. There must have been some other reason for the polygamistic history of Henry VIII, and Froude, by research, tolerably well established this fact. The question with Henry VIII was especially the question of an heir. That was the all-important matter for him—the continuation of the royal line, and he had been singularly unfortunate in two of his marriages. To completely rehabilitate Henry VIII would not have been possible for anybody to do, but Froude has certainly shown that this king was grossly slandered, and that his character was absolutely reverse of what it had been represented. He was not a sensual king at all, but a very obstinate, self-willed Englishman, determined to have his own ways in spite of churches and conventions. After having read Froude we obtain an entirely new idea of Henry, quite independent of the fact whether we accept the historian's conclusion or not. Also we obtain an entirely new idea of the character of Elizabeth. Here also Froude judged and wrote directly against commonly received opinion. Roman Catholic historians had little good to say of this queen; Protestant historians had, on the other hand, praised her to the sky. Froude, although intensely Protestant in all his sympathies, had the courage to show that neither judgment was correct. He has painted for us the real Elizabeth with all her faults—and with certain classes of faults that other historians had not noticed at all. And yet we do not like Elizabeth less for this new estimate of her as a woman: on the contrary we like her much more. It was especially in painting the character of Mary of Scots that Froude offended the Roman Catholics; but, here again, although he may be convicted of some historical inaccuracies, his general portrait of the woman is likely to be accepted throughout the future time as the most correct ever presented. I have touched on these points only to call your attention to the extraordinary

independence of Froude's judgment. In all his books you will find the same characteristic; and in all his books you will find the same matchless style.

Though his great history will remain his chief monument, his literary value can be quite as well studied in his other books. The *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, comprising four volumes of compositions upon a great variety of subjects, shows his power in a number of phases. Besides the historian, you will here find the dreamer, the writer of parables, even the story-teller. As a story-teller, a philosophical story teller, I do not know anybody to compare with Froude except Gœthe. It is true that Froude wrote only a few philosophical stories; but these are like nothing else in English; it is only in German that we can find parallels for them. Professor Saintsbury thinks that the story of the cat, entitled *The Cat's Pilgrimage*, is perhaps the best; and it is a very wonderful thing—for it treats the whole moral problem of human society within a few pages. But I may dare to express my own preference for the dream entitled *At a Railway Siding*—which is a parable never to be forgotten by men who read it. A man dies and is brought up for judgment before the power of heaven. After a careful examination of the various acts and thoughts of his life, he is permitted to enter heaven, on condition that no evil testimony can be brought against him by any of the witnesses present. But suddenly a curtain is withdrawn at the end of the judgment hall;—and there appear thousands of cattle and myriads of sheep and pigs and birds—also innumerable fishes; and all these cry out for vengeance upon the man, because he killed and ate them in the time of his life. So a new question came up to be decided,—namely, what excuse could a man offer for so vast a destruction of life? The fishes, the birds, and the beasts said: “He has done nothing but write books, stupid books: is it an excuse for killing us and eating us?” If I remember rightly, the man was forgiven, since it appeared that the value of his books was sufficient to counterbalance the destruction of life charged against him. Of course, the moral of the story is very much that of Ruskin's teaching,—that life

without effort, without production, is crime. The world offers us many good things; but it is our duty to pay for them by doing work which will prove of benefit to mankind. You will find several other very remarkable things in these four volumes of miscellaneous studies.

Before Freeman died, and before Froude succeeded to the chair of history at Oxford, so long occupied by his great enemy, he had been able to obtain sufficient credit with the Government to obtain several missions. He was thus enabled to travel over a good part of the world,—visiting South Africa and the West Indies among other places; and he produced several books upon the English colonies of great interest. His book on the West Indies was entitled *The Bow of Ulysses*<sup>1</sup> in the first edition; the title being afterwards slightly altered. If you remember the old Greek epic, you will remember that the bow of Ulysses was a bow which nobody else could bend except Ulysses himself. The problem justifying this title was that brought into existence by the condition of former slavery in the islands. The book was a very good one, and will always remain a standard authority in regard to the state of the islands at that time. Besides works of travel Froude produced a wonderful life of *John Bunyan*,<sup>2</sup> and a life of *Cæsar*—subjects so widely different that it is rather surprising to find them treated by the same pen. The life of *Cæsar*, a result of wide classical study, is perhaps the most romantic book ever written about a period of Roman history; yet it is only a biography. This is one of the books that every student should read. It is not necessary to accept the historian's opinions *in toto*; but not to have read *Cæsar* is to have missed one of the great sensations of Victorian literary art.

Another subject upon which Froude threw a new and most romantic light, was the history of English seamanship during the reign of Elizabeth. It was an original idea, when undertaking a history of the destruction of the Spanish Armada, to seek his authority not from English, but only from Spanish

<sup>1</sup> *The English in the West Indies, or the bow of Ulysses* 1888.

<sup>2</sup> *Bunyan* 1880.

sources. Doing this, he produced the volume called *The Spanish Story of the Armada*,<sup>1</sup> and he followed it up with a volume of essays on the great English seamen of the period,—Hawkins, Drake, Howard, &c. This volume was entitled *English Seamen in the 16th Century*.<sup>2</sup> Both of these books are admirable reading. You will find in one of them also a record of a journey to Norway, which is a delightful chapter of travel. Finally must be mentioned Froude's historical work on Ireland—books of a character entirely different from anything ever produced before his time: *The English in Ireland*,<sup>3</sup> and *The Two Chiefs of Dunboy*,<sup>4</sup> — the latter a kind of historical romance, the nearest approach to a novel ever attempted by Froude. It was not very successful; a historian's novels rarely are. But one of his publications which had an immense sale, in spite of the fact that it excited immense indignation, angering even Tennyson, was his *Life and Letters of Carlyle*.<sup>5</sup> Carlyle had entrusted Froude with the document necessary for the writing of a biography, after his death. Froude considered the MSS. placed in his hands exactly as he would have considered any historical MSS. :—he published the whole thing with scrupulous exactitude, not omitting many letters which showed the weak side of Carlyle's character. For this he was very severely criticized. But there is no doubt that he believed himself performing a literary duty; and the best judges now are inclined to think that he was right. We need not consider the biography of Carlyle especially in the light of an original worker. But the history, the *Short Studies*, the life of *Csæar*, the volumes of travels, and the two volumes of essays relating to the history of the Armada and of English seamen—all of these should be read. Not read once only: they should be in the hands of any lover of English literature who wishes to study the purest of simple style, and should be read over and over again many times, independently of the subject discussed.

<sup>1</sup> *The Spanish story of the Armada, and other essays* 1892.

<sup>2</sup> 1895.

<sup>3</sup> *The English in Ireland in the 18th century*, 3 vols. 1872-4; 1881)

<sup>4</sup> 1889.

<sup>5</sup> 1884.

## JOHN RUSKIN

John Ruskin,<sup>1</sup> born in 1819, was as directly opposite of Froude in style and sentiment as it is possible for any writer to be. He represents for us the most ornate style, the most poetical English of the epoch. He is a prose poet—so much of a prose poet that conservative critics have declared some of his methods illegitimate. Much, for example, as Saintsbury admires Ruskin, and praises certain of his pages, the professor alleges that a good deal of Ruskin's prose is too much like blank verse. We need not, however, make any such fine distinction as the professor would wish to establish between what is legitimate poetical prose and illegitimate poetical prose. He is almost alone in his opinions. Sufficient to say that even he concurs in the general decision that Ruskin's prose is the greatest romantic prose of the Victorian era, and perhaps of any period before it.

Ruskin has to be considered in three different aspects:—as a teacher of art, as a poet and great master of expression; finally, as a social reformer. One might lecture upon Ruskin daily for the time of a full year without exhausting the subject. Ruskin is almost too large a figure to treat of properly in this brief summary. But I shall try to condense the most important facts about him into as short a compass as possible.

Ruskin was the son of a wine merchant,—a very respectable business in England: partly because it requires a great capital to carry on in the higher branches; partly because it requires a great deal of knowledge in regard to foreign countries as well as in regard to qualities of stocks; and partly because a great wine merchant is especially the adviser of the aristocracy in regard to choice of wines. He had thus a very wealthy father, and was born to inherit a fortune. But like Browning's father, the father of Ruskin would not put his boy to school. Like Browning he was taught at home; and like Browning he enjoyed the advantages of travel. As a little boy

<sup>1</sup> (1819-1900).

he seems to have been very severely treated; his mother being a rigidly religious person, who thought it was wrong for a child to play with toys. Instead of letting him play with toys, she made him read the Bible every day, until he actually learned the whole of it by heart. Cruel and senseless as this seems, it nevertheless had a good effect upon Ruskin in after-life,—not because of the religious intention at all, but because of the accidental result. As I told you before, the Bible represents (in the old King James' version at least) the most splendid English and the most melodious English of which the language is capable;—and this English is thus wonderful, not because it is the work of any one translator, but because it is the work of many hundreds of translators, working by generation, each generation improving the English of its predecessors. Undoubtedly Ruskin learned a good deal of the music of his style from the sonorous English of the Bible, though afterwards his Greek and French and Italian studies all enabled him to enrich this power of expression with effects of colour and of light which Bible English alone could not give. Growing up he was more kindly treated; finally, as a lad, he was almost spoiled—allowed to have his own way in everything. He was able to buy all the books and pictures and beautiful things that he pleased; and he was allowed to study very much as he pleased. I believe this is the exact reverse of English education generally. The rule is indeed to treat children severely from the age of 6 or 7, and before that to pet them as much as possible. Happily Ruskin's character was not at all spoiled by the fact that he was never allowed to live like other children. Because he was not permitted to have toys, he played with plants and stones and flowers, and learned to know and to think a great deal about them. This probably helped to make an artist of him. All through his period of home education he was carefully taught drawing and painting; and he attained a very considerable skill in this profession. But he never made it a profession to live by; he was wise enough to know that he could do better as a writer than as a painter. But it was only after having learned all about painting that he attempted to write on the subject.

This was after he left Oxford, where he graduated, also obtaining a prize. Although he had had no school or college training he was entered at the University without difficulty; and the University is still proud of him. He did not publish anything immediately after completing his studies: it took him no less than seventeen years to complete and print his first great work, *Modern Painters*. Next appeared his great work upon Renaissance architecture, entitled *The Stones of Venice*.<sup>1</sup> And it would be probably tiresome for you to write the numerous and fantastic titles of all the smaller books which he afterwards produced at intervals. Sufficient to say that these books treat about almost every department and school of art and of architecture — besides containing a vast amount of æsthetic philosophy, and a good deal of material in relation to matters outside of art—such as social reform, political economy, and the ethics of literature.

The importance of Ruskin in art was extraordinary—because before him there had really been no English art critics of any importance. You may say that he was the first, as well as the greatest, of English writers on art. And he began and completed his mission, as an art teacher, in a totally original way—violently opposed to all previous convention. His immense book, *Modern Painters*,<sup>2</sup> was written chiefly with the object of proving that the English painter Turner was the greatest of modern painters; but it also contained astonishing reviews of the works of nearly all the other distinguished artists of modern times. Turner was essentially a romantic painter, a painter who painted as he pleased, disobeying the rules of the old masters. It required a great deal of courage to proclaim him superior to all other modern painters; but Ruskin actually convinced the world of his greatness. At a later day, when the pre-Raphaelite school came into being it was Ruskin who first fought for the theories of Rossetti, Morris, and Burne-Jones, and who called the attention to the great beauty of their

<sup>1</sup> *The stones of Venice . . . With illustrations drawn by the author.* 3 vols. 1851-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Modern painters: their superiority in the art of landscape painting to all the ancient masters proved by example of the true, the beautiful, and the intellectual, from the works of modern artists, especially from those of J. M. W. Turner, Esq., R. A.* 1843. 2nd edn. 1844. 3rd edn. 5 vols 1846-60. Complete edn. 6 vols. 1888.

work. This again was a romantic movement. We must identify Ruskin with the highest achievement of the romantic school both in art and in literature—for he helped with his praise every great romantic book. But his next greatest achievement was in relation to architecture. Here especially you will find him a romantic of the romantics. In spite of all that had been written before him in favour of classic architecture, and against Gothic architecture, Ruskin took the ground that Gothic architecture and kindred architecture of the mediæval Italian school were superior to all other architecture. Undoubtedly he went to extremes, but he actually provoked a European revival of Gothic architecture. He brought the middle ages back again in respect of certain æsthetic and emotional tendency.

It is not possible for me here to fully explain how he did this: I can only tell you something about his general way of thinking. He believed that all great art sprang from a religious idea,—Greek art not excepted; and he held that architecture or painting or sculpture showed at their best only in the epoch when the religious idea was most strong. As religious feeling became intense, the arts became noble and truthful; as religious feeling began to decline the arts became insincere, conventional, and lifeless. Modern civilization appeared to him devoid of all beauty; he hated railway and telegraphs and steamships and the sight of factory building and the sight of modern streets. Modern civilization appeared to him “ugliness itself.” And he thought that ugliness of everything was really due to the decline of the religious idea. Throughout Europe people have begun to disbelieve; therefore the greater number remained incompetent to see or to feel beauty. And of course Ruskin imagined a necessary and eternal relation between goodness and beauty, and between wickedness and ugliness. I think that you can see several false positions in such a way of thinking. Everybody saw that Ruskin’s theories were very defective indeed. But when he came to explain, to illustrate, and to illuminate particular beliefs of his,—with the help of beautiful pictures and in a style of the most musical and beau-

tiful English that ever had been written precise critics forgot to criticize. They allowed him to convince them of particular facts, even while they refused to endorse his general argument. For example Ruskin could not persuade a master-builder that Gothic architecture was superior in beauty to Greek architecture or to Roman architecture in the more majestic form of the latter; but he could make the master-builder discover meanings in Gothic architecture that had never before been dreamed of. He could point out a dragon or a wivern upon some part of a Gothic cathedral, and make us understand the idea of the artist as it never had been understood before. In short he *interpreted* Gothic architecture, as representing the spirit of the middle ages. And that was why he was able to create a revival of it, —making people love it for the mystery and the ghostly beauty that it expressed.

It is no use to try to believe in Mr. Ruskin as a critic: in fact you must be very careful not to believe in him too much. You must be cautious. When he speak evil of Greek sculpture, —when he says that the Venus de Medici is “an uninteresting little person,”—when he says stupid things about Japanese art (a subject which he never understood at all, and thought to be half diverting), —when he abuses, strange to say, the most Gothic of all modern artists, and perhaps the greatest illustrator that ever lived, Gustav Doré,—then you must understand that Ruskin is talking nonsense, or, at best, expressing prejudices. The prejudice which most troubled him was a prejudice born of his own religious theory,—that nothing could be legitimate art which did not have an ethical idea behind it. Of course he was utterly wrong in this. Art expresses the joy of life very often, and in the most beautiful way, quite independently of ethical ideas. The fact is that Ruskin’s opinion of ethics was a little too narrow; it might have been widened very considerably.

And yet, do not think of Ruskin as a sectarian Christian. There was nothing of sect about him. He could sympathize with Gothic art, and the spirit of the middle ages; but he was not a Roman Catholic. He could condemn religious intolerance

and social hypocrisy as sturdily as any Puritan;—and yet he could scarcely have been called a Protestant, notwithstanding his early training. In fact I do not know whether he could have been called exactly a Christian believer in the ordinary sense. He sympathized with all great religions, finding beauty in all of them,—in things pagan as well as things Christian. There was no dogma in this mental world,—at least no merely religious dogma. But he was very religious in another sense,—in a great, large, deep, generous way; and he was inclined to think wicked anything in the shape of art that expressed the immoral or illegal. I need scarcely say that with such feeling he could never understand Greek art. He would not have been a defender of what has been called “naked art,”—though some forms of it seemed to him at least excusable.

Perhaps the best idea of Ruskin’s mystical way of meeting certain religious questions has been best exemplified in his treatment of the subject of Trinity in his book entitled *Eagle’s Nest*. You know the doctrine of Trinity is the doctrine of 3 in 1; the teaching that in God there are three persons—respectively called Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—and that these three are nevertheless one. Perhaps you have read of the Scriptural assertion that sins against the Father and against the Son can be forgiven; but the sin that is a sin against the Holy Ghost never will be forgiven. Ruskin interpreted this doctrine very much as he interpreted certain bits of Gothic architecture. He says that he does not blame a man who does not believe in God as the Father: many persons cannot indulge or understand such a thing. And again he does not blame a man for not believing in the Son—such belief requires particular conditions of mind. But, he says, I do believe in the Holy Ghost; and I am quite sure that the man who does not will be destroyed, and be eternally destroyed. But what is the Holy Ghost? The Holy Ghost is in biblical language “the Lord and Giver of Life”—the divine principle of life in all things,—the creating force,—the substance of all soul, of all being. Now Ruskin’s argument is this,—that any man who wantonly destroys life, destroys beauty, destroys goodness, is sinning against Life, against the Divine,

against the Holy Ghost. To him the Holy Ghost was much more than a Christian idea: it was the great idea behind all great religion.

And with such ways of thinking, it was natural that Ruskin should have proved himself later in life something like the founder of a new creed,—religious and social. Like Tolstoi, he became the teacher of a new religion, a practical religion, a new kind of Christianity. It is impossible to think of one man without thinking of the other: Tolstoi and Ruskin lived very much in the same way, felt very much in the same way and distinguished themselves very much in the same way. Like Tolstoi, Ruskin was a rich man who devoted his money unselfishly to new, moral and social, reform, and made himself poor for the sake of the poor. But there were certain marked differences in the ideas of these two on the subject of art. You will remember my telling you about Tolstoi's opinion in regard to art: he thinks that nothing is legitimate which common people cannot love and understand. But Ruskin who passed all his life in the practical study of every kind of art would never accept any such position—never! Ruskin would have said, and did say, that no man can understand great art without much teaching and much training; and some people never could be made to understand art at all. But, believing in the relation between ethics and æthetics, between beauty and morality, Ruskin was firmly convinced that the best way to make the common people good was to teach them how to understand and to love beautiful things. With that object in view he expended a great part of his fortune for the education in art of working men: he opened art schools for them, wrote expensive books for them, which he gave away,—established museums for them, became himself their teacher,—and finally founded a society which might have been considered as the starting point for a new religion and a new socialism. It was not successful—how could it be? But the idea was very noble and effected much good, and never will be entirely forgotten. Before we conclude the subject of Ruskin I want to read to you some of the articles in the declaration of faith, which everybody

who wanted to join Ruskin's society was expected to make. But first a word about Ruskin's social politics.

The social ideas of Mr. Ruskin ought to be of particular interest to Japanese students, for reasons which you will presently see. If Ruskin had come to Japan, and had been asked by government officials to address the Japanese students on the subject of commercial morality, he would have done exactly the contrary to what had been asked of him. He would have said: "Gentlemen, I have been asked to talk to you about what is very improperly called commercial morality. And I want you to know that what is improperly called commercial morality in England is not morality, but immorality. There is no morality in European methods of business: there is only selfish interest. Your old-fashioned ideas of morality in business were just and true: in feudal times there may have been, of course, some immoral merchants; but the old ideas of your business men as to the way in which business ought to be done were very much more moral than anything European." That is certainly what he would have said. Perhaps he might have added:—"But now, as you will be obliged, in order to exist, to do business with immoral people, you will have to become immoral and to learn all their deception and trickery." As a matter of fact Ruskin thought about trade just as it was thought about in ancient times in this country; and he thought rightly. The very expression "commercial morality" is a lie—in so far as it refers to Western methods of commerce. If you want to know more about the subject, just read Mr. Spencer's essay on *The Morals of Trade*—in which you will see that if any person in England were to try to do business in a perfectly moral way he would become bankrupt as a matter of certainty. It is very hard to tell the truth about conventional lies; for everybody abuses the man who tells the truth, and tries to injure him. Many tried to injure Mr. Ruskin; but they were not successful. There is one man of letters to-day, who does not lie, even to please Englishmen; and he states in a few ironical words the real truth on this vexed subject of the want of "commercial morality in Japan." I mean Rudyard Kipling. He

said that what is wanted really by the West is to make Japan accept "the privilege of being cheated upon equal terms." That is just what Mr. Ruskin also thought about modern trade morals—the whole thing was in his eyes, as it must be in the eyes of any moral thinkers, mere "cheating upon equal terms."

Now you have heard, of course, complaint about the fact that in Japan competition is not encouraged by public opinion as it is in other countries. Competition was not thought the best possible condition of activity in old times. Mr. Ruskin believes that any competition in business, by which one man could make profit by injuring others, was necessarily wrong;—he would have been quite in harmony with old Japanese teaching about the conduct of competitors. Again the whole of Western business is based upon the principle of buying as cheaply as possible, and of selling as dearly as possible. Mr. Ruskin thought that it was very wrong to buy things as cheaply as possible:—he thought that any man able to pay for a thing ought to give, without being asked, what he believed to be a compensating price. He thought that all bargaining was wrong. Again he believed it was very wrong to sell as dearly as possible,—that involved or encouraged cheating. You have no right, he considers, to ask more for an object than what you believe it to be worth. Once more, it is the Western principle in business to employ labour as cheaply as possible, and treat the labourer very much after the fashion of a slave. This Mr. Ruskin considered sheer wickedness. He proclaimed it was the duty of every employer to pay those whom he employs enough money to enable them to live comfortably and to have a certain amount of leisure. And he thought that it was not enough merely to pay one's servant. Besides that it was a duty to show them personal kindness and sympathy,—to treat them, within certain limits, as members of a household. And he gave admirable reasons for all this in answer to those who opposed his views with statistics and market reports. If he could not answer the assertions that the only means of establishing price was the market itself, he could at least prove that the absence of moral feeling in business was tending to the

utter destruction of all beauty in production. Almost everything now manufactured was ugly, however useful it might be; and there was no reason why the world should be deprived of all beauty and filled with all ugliness except this. In order to produce a beautiful world, it is necessary that the workman should love his work; and he can be made to love his work only when he finds it pleasurable and profitable. Treat all workmen like brothers as far as possible;—try to make them a little happier;—allow them to enjoy all the liberty that is consistent with business necessity; and they will begin to produce beautiful things. Those were Mr. Ruskin's ideas stated in a general way. I do not mean to tell you that I think them practical: men are too selfish to be reformed as Mr. Ruskin wanted to reform them. They are likely to be realized only in far-off time. But they were noble and good ideas; and they have been really exerting a great deal of good influence. You must not think of Ruskin as being a socialist like Tolstoi;—a believer in the equality of men. On the contrary Ruskin was essentially an aristocrat; he believed in class distinction; his socialism was altogether of the moral kind,—he advocated no more than a brotherly feeling among all classes; and when I say a brotherly feeling, you can take it in the Japanese meaning, implying the duties between the elder and the younger brothers. It was not through the lower classes that he hoped to bring about the reform, but through the upper classes. It was to the rich that he spoke, telling them: “You are not only immoral in your selfish treatment of the working men; you are foolish. You are injuring civilization by treating them as you do. Treat them differently; and the quality of all production will be improved; and the riches of your country will be increased; and the general happiness will be augmented.” As for the working people themselves, he hoped to benefit them through education, but only to the extent of developing their productive ability. This reminds me to tell you that Ruskin's ideas about education were just as radical as the idea on the subject of political economy. In saying that the whole of Western system of education was entirely wrong, he had many

great thinkers with him;—but it is not so certain that some of his proposed reforms would serve the purpose intended. He wanted all philological study to be banished from his ideal schools;—he declared that the student should not be allowed to study grammar, and he insisted that it was not necessary. Latin and Greek he opposed; and he advocated, in scientific classes, the substitution of object teaching for lecture. In literature, for example, he would have insisted on confining the study to the understanding and the production of emotional beauty and power. He would have said that no man learns to write a beautiful thing by studying grammar, or by mastering its etymology,—but only by learning to love beautiful things in good books, and by trying to do something oneself in the same direction. And his suggestions are often very good;—for example, he tells the literary student, that it is not the mere grammar of a sentence that he should be careful about, but it is the value of every separate word, and the value of grouping, and the effects possible to obtain by different arrangements—so as to select only the very strongest and best. He said that the construction of a sentence should be accomplished just like the construction of a beautiful piece of mosaic work. And you must remember that the man who said these things was himself a real scholar—one who had studied all the studies that he denounces, such as Greek and Latin;—and a very great master of English; so that his advice is worth thinking about. Above all things the student should not let himself be prejudiced against Ruskin because of the mistakes that Ruskin has made, or because of the foolish things that he has said. Look only for the great and the wide and generous thinking; and you will find a harvest of extraordinary riches.

I will now read to you a few sentences from the confession of faith which Ruskin made every member of his society accept as a condition of affiliation. I will not read the whole; because the following paragraphs sufficiently show the spirit:—

I trust in the nobleness of human nature, in the majesty of its faculties, the fulness of its mercy, and the joy of its love.

And I will strive to love my neighbour as myself, and, even when I cannot, will act as if I did.

I will not deceive, or cause to be deceived, any human being for my gain or pleasure; nor hurt, or cause to be hurt, any human being for my gain or pleasure; nor rob, or cause to be robbed, any human being for my joy or pleasure.

I will not kill or hurt any living creature needlessly, nor destroy any beautiful thing, but will strive to save and comfort all gentle life, and guard and perfect all natural beauty, upon the earth.

I will obey all the laws of my country faithfully; and the orders of its monarch, and of all persons appointed to be in authority under its monarch, so far as such laws or commands are consistent with what I suppose to be the law of God; and when they are not, and seem in anywise to need change, I will oppose them loyally and deliberately, not with malicious, concealed, disorderly violence.

Now you will see that this is really a very noble code without any comment from me—but I should like you to observe how much better it harmonizes with the old ethical teaching of your own country than with anything which is now called commercial morality. In fact you cannot harmonize the two. Perhaps you would think one restriction somewhat extreme, namely,—that one must not be a hunter, must not kill birds or animals without necessity. Still I must say that I sympathize with this: to kill any animal or bird for mere amusement seems to me just as wrong as to kill a man. You will find a good exposition of Ruskin's political ideas in the volume entitled *Time and Tide*.<sup>1</sup> But I believe that his literary qualities will better appeal to you in such volumes as *The Ethics of the Dust*,<sup>2</sup> and *Sesame and Lilies*.<sup>3</sup> Almost in any volume you will find beautiful things: it would be impossible to make a satisfactory selection out of so great a treasure-house. But I will mention one chapter that may attract you by reason of its curiosity as

<sup>1</sup> *Time and tide*, by Weare and Tyne. *Twenty-five letters to a working man of Sunderland* (Thomas Dixon) on the laws of work. 1867.

<sup>2</sup> *The ethics of the dust: ten lectures to little housewives in the elements of crystallisation* 1866.

<sup>3</sup> *Sesame and lilies, two lectures delivered at Manchester in 1864 . . . 1. Of kings' treasures. 2. Of queens' gardens* 1865.

well as beauty : the chapter on serpents entitled *Living Waves*. Perhaps you have never observed how beautiful the motion of a snake can be : Ruskin will teach you how to observe it. And if you like that, you will search his pages through for other wonderful things and find them. He will teach you new ideas about the beauty of clouds, the beauty of trees, the beauty of flowing water, and the beauty of birds and other living creatures.

### MATTHEW ARNOLD

Froude and Ruskin, two greatest masters of Victorian English, have now been noticed. We can summarize the values of the rest more briefly. Of Matthew Arnold<sup>1</sup> you all know something ; and I have lectured about him so often that I will not attempt it now. Besides his faculties of poet and prose-writer, his place as a critic deserves consideration. If you read his different volumes of essays now, you read them chiefly for the English ; and perhaps you do not find them nearly so interesting as the essays of Macaulay. They are not. But Matthew Arnold was very important to Victorian literature, not by what he produced so much as by what he taught. His essays will be probably forgotten in another generation ; we have got far beyond them to-day. And they will never live by their style as Macaulay's essays must do. But Matthew Arnold's essays really laid the foundation of the new English criticism,—criticism based upon the methods of Sainte-Beuve. It is for this reason that you should give Matthew Arnold particular attention. He first taught English scholars how to write and think in new ways ; and he did it partly by setting examples, but much more by showing those scholars how stupid and incapable English criticism was, compared with French criticism.

<sup>1</sup> (1822-1888).

## ADDINGTON SYMONDS

Two writers with considerable pretensions to fine style were John Addington Symonds<sup>1</sup> and Walter Pater. Both were university scholars; both were essayists and historians; both died young, and did not fulfil the whole promise of their abilities. Symonds, the son of a Bristol doctor, whose wealth was chiefly accumulated by his successful treatment of the disease of consumption, inherited considerable money. But he also inherited the very disease against which his father had fought. As a consequence he had to pass the latter part of his life high up in the mountains of Switzerland,—a sensitive, delicate, but strangely energetic man, working up to the very hour of his death. He produced the best history of the Renaissance<sup>2</sup> which exists—that is, as a general history of the whole period covered; perhaps in the matter of special periods some French essayists and historians have surpassed him. The chief fault with this great work was prolixity; but it was probably a fault of youth. Symonds wrote a very poetical style; and he studied effects of style so much that he seems to have wasted space very often merely for the sake of a few fine sentences. However, this fault lessened as time went on; and you will find the improvement very marked in his later essays. The best examples of his decorative style are in the two volumes of studies upon *The Greek Poets*;<sup>3</sup> and the finest pages of the descriptive writing in *The Greek Poets* is the conclusion of the essay upon Sappho. There are very fine essays also in the three volumes of essays entitled *Studies in Southern Europe*.<sup>4</sup> Symonds also produced several volumes of poetry. His original verse, though correct, is never great—mostly consisting of melancholy sonnets. But his little book entitled *Wine, Women, and Song*<sup>5</sup>—a treatise upon the old student songs of the middle ages with

<sup>1</sup> (1840-1893).

<sup>2</sup> *Renaissance in Italy* 1875-86.

<sup>3</sup> *Studies of the Greek poets* 1873-76.

<sup>4</sup> *Sketches and studies in Italy and Greece* 1898 (New edn of *Sketches in Italy and Greece, Sketches and studies in Italy, and Italian byways*.)

<sup>5</sup> *Wine, women, and song: medieval Latin students' songs now first translated into English verse, with an essay, by J. A. S.* 1884.

translations from the Latin—is very valuable and must be considered a literary success.

As an essayist Symonds is far superior to Matthew Arnold: indeed he has no Victorian superior except Froude; and he was a greater scholar than Froude, and a scholar in extraordinary directions. You should remember, also, that like Froude he was an object of attack for religious prejudices of the most violent kind. Every Roman Catholic will tell you that his history of the Renaissance is everything that a history should not be; but this is simply because of his famous chapter on Jesuit education, and on the Catholic reaction in Italy. He told the truth boldly as he believed and dared the consequences. But Symonds was rich and liked solitude and did not care in the least whether his books sold well or not. He wrote from the love of the subject, never for money; and his work will last. I mention these matters in order that you may not suffer yourselves to be prejudiced against him by any shallow criticism. But you will find the best of his books as to style, and as to charm of the subject, in his *Southern study*. Next to Ruskin he was the most ornamental writer of the period; and though he never equalled Ruskin's best pages, he compares very favourably even with Ruskin, in regard to the history of art in Italy, if we leave out of the question the æsthetic theories in uttering which Ruskin stood entirely alone like a great discoverer.

### WALTER PATER

As Symonds represented the florid style of essay, Walter Pater<sup>1</sup> represented the severe style. At one time it was thought that this young scholar would prove the greatest stylist of the century. But he never did. He died too young, and never completely formed his style. It has the great fault of showing the effort that it cost. It is not like the style of Froude, which never shows effort. But it has merits also—curious merits.

<sup>1</sup> Walter Horatio Pater (1839-1894).

Pater's models were classic, of course, for the most part; but some of them were French. What he especially studied in the French writers was the use of the "*mot de lumière*"—"word of light," or "illuminating word." This means generally the use of an old word or very common word in an entirely new relation. I do not know how to explain it otherwise than by examples. Pater was the first, I believe, to use the extraordinary phrase "pathetic pleasures." He was speaking of the pleasures of the miserably poor when he used that phrase. You know that "pathetic" means "causing sadness and pity." We talk of a pathetic poem, meaning a poem that brings tears to the eye. "Pathetic pleasures" would mean pleasures of such a kind that when we see poor people made happy by them, the sight of such happiness in small things makes us sad, fills us with pity and compassion. I think you know the feeling. Sometimes if you go far away, into a very poor little village, where there are no toy-shops or money to buy a toy, you will find the children amusing themselves with funny little toys invented by themselves, or clumsily made by their parents. And the sight of such little toys would at once make you smile and make you feel sorry—make you wish to give the children something better. You might call such toys "pathetic toys"; and the word pathetic would then become a *mot de lumière*—exactly expressing the feeling given by the sight of the toys.

That was Pater's special characteristics—the use of the "illuminating words." But otherwise his style was severe enough, except as regards rhythm. It was a rule with him that every sentence should have its regular rise and fall, like a wave. But he used very few adjectives, and scarcely any strange words. He came very near to producing a new classical style; but he did not quite succeed. His works include a philosophical novel of the 3rd century entitled *Marius the Epicurean*<sup>1</sup>—thought by some to be his best work; a volume of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*<sup>2</sup> (not so brilliant as

<sup>1</sup> *Marius the Epicurean; his sensations and ideas.* 2 vols. 1885.

<sup>2</sup> 1873.

the studies of Symonds, but quite different, and equally valuable in a particular way) and several volumes of essays, the best of which, perhaps, is *Appreciations*.<sup>1</sup> *Imaginary Portraits*<sup>2</sup> also has its admirers. I do not know that I can recommend Pater strongly to you as an essayist: other men have treated the same subject better; and his style is not good to study without a guide. Whether you like *Marius* will depend very much upon your liking for neo-Platonism and certain classic philosophies. But the *Studies of the Renaissance* you can read with profit: it will help you considerably to appreciate the larger work of Symonds on the same subject.

#### TYNDALL AND HUXLEY

And now we come to science. Literature in English science is also represented by two entirely different styles. One classic and severe; one romantic and ornamental. Already we have mentioned that we can scarcely mention the greatest names,—the very greatest names in intimate relation to literature. No man has written stronger and clearer English than Mr. Spencer; but I cannot call Mr. Spencer exactly a representative of style—though he has written a fine essay on the subject of style. Most of his work treats of subjects demanding the use of Greek and Latin poly-syllables: I might call it technical work, technical English. Nor is Darwin, who changed the whole thought of Europe, exactly a literary figure. Style is chiefly represented by Huxley and Tyndall. Tyndall<sup>3</sup> who wrote many books and delivered many lectures on scientific subjects, attempted to appeal to the general reader by addressing him almost in the manner of Ruskin. His prose is often highly poetical; and his enemies declared that such a style was totally unsuited to the subject. But it had merit; and you will find good examples of it in the volumes entitled *Forms of Water*.<sup>4</sup> It was not a very

<sup>1</sup> *Appreciations. With an essay on style* 1889.

<sup>2</sup> 1887.

<sup>3</sup> John Tyndall (1820-1893).

<sup>4</sup> *The forms of water in clouds, rivers, ice and glaciers* 1872.

great style; but it was the most romantic style used by any professional man of science. Professor Huxley,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, used the very plainest of English, simplest English ever used by a man of science. About the most difficult subject he talked to people in about the same simple way that a teacher in a primary school would talk to little children; and he did miracles of teaching by that way. He said that no man was fit to be a physiologist or a geologist or a paleontologist or a psychologist who could not explain, in simple English, any fact of his special science even to an uneducated person. Thus he was the most successful of all men who ever lived in writing manuals for students; and his books on physiography and upon physiology were miracles of simple style. I am sorry to say that the English of these has been quite spoiled by stupid editors who revised them a few years ago on account of discoveries made after Huxley's death. But there was nobody to spoil the style of the nine volumes of essays which he wrote, now issued in the beautiful Eversley edition. These include essays on almost every scientific subject as well as a variety of polemic argument—written in answer to religious attacks made upon him (I think you know that religious people greatly atoned for their opposition at a later day by giving him burial with great honour in Westminster Abbey). Articles of controversy need not interest you; but almost any of the essays on science ought to interest you very much and teach you a great deal at the same time. Remember that these nine volumes only represent Huxley's addresses to the general public. When as President of the British Association, or as President of other scientific bodies he was addressing an audience of specialists then he could be quite as technical as anybody else. The purely scientific essays represent another series of larger volumes; but these belong to learning, not to literature. He is related to literature by the delightful English of the essays. His model was Hobbes—the English philosopher of the Restoration. But Huxley was a great scholar, even in the matter of the dead languages; and and he drew his power from a variety of sources.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895).

We now come to the literature of criticism. What vast improvement there has here been I have already told you; and I have already explained that this improvement was chiefly due to French influence,—to the new idea of criticism expounded by Sainte-Beuve, and first imitated imperfectly by Matthew Arnold. But Matthew Arnold did not possess those qualities, either of culture or of sympathy, required for real criticism of the catholic kind. In our own time, however, a school of criticism has come into existence,—a school of so high a class that the old fashioned criticism has been practically killed—except in newspapers. To be a critic of literature to-day, one must be both a very learned man and a very remarkable man.

As you might suppose, the great critics are few,—even in a country where the universities are supposed to turn out every year between four and five thousand scholars. In fact, I am going to cite to you only three names. Of course there are numbers of specialists,—very great specialists: men whose authority upon some one particular subject is unquestioned. But these men remain outside of the subject proper. When I speak of a great critic in the general sense, I mean a man capable of taking up any new literary work, estimating its merits justly, explaining them satisfactorily, tracing the influences that produced them back to original sources, and interpreting to us exactly the relation between the history and the character of the writer, and the history and the character of the book. The man who can do this must be a very great reader, a very good scholar, and a master of several European tongues. It is not enough to know Greek and Latin and English; and to have great insight to criticize everything of merit in the classics and in English, one must also know French, German, and Italian, and something of the literatures of those languages. One must also be sympathetic, tolerant, and free from all prejudices of religion or of class. You cannot expect to find many persons with such abilities and qualifications; and, as I said, I am going to cite only three names,—those of Professors Saintsbury, Gosse, and Dowden. Of these professional critics the first is Professor of English Literature at the University of Edinburgh;

the second holds the same position at Cambridge; and the third at Dublin University. All of these men have obtained high distinctions from other universities besides their own, both in England and out of it; and two of them are, even in France, recognized as great authorities upon French literature. You can always, or very nearly always, fully accept the judgments of these men about any book. You will find them commonly in accord—though, as you should expect, each may find different reasons for praise or blame. And so far as English literature is concerned (I am not so sure about French) I strongly advise you not to seek appreciation or condemnation of a book from any other quarter. Find first what these men have thought. After that, read whatever you please in the way of criticism; and you are not likely to be misled.

#### SAINTSBURY

The first of these professional critics, George Saintsbury,<sup>1</sup> has been a prodigious worker. He has brought into existence whole libraries of literary history and criticism, both on English and French subjects. Perhaps for the reason that he had worked so hard, and is still working quite as hard, his method leaves much to be desired in point of style. He does not write like an artist—probably never found time to amuse himself with beautiful English; and it must be confessed that his style, crammed with parenthetical sentences, wheel within wheel, is often very provoking and difficult to read. He is the least artistic, and the least interesting of the three. Nevertheless he is perhaps the most accurate and fair. It is almost impossible to find a judgment in which he has been at fault—though he has probably made several thousands, and, as an editor of series, tens of thousands. You can find some traces of a tendency to conservatism in his work; for example, in his belief, so often expressed, that rhythmical effects in prose become

<sup>1</sup> George Edward Bateman Saintsbury (1845-1933).

illegitimate in the same proportion that they resemble rhythmical effects in verse. But even this kind of conservatism never caused him to make a false estimate in regard to general method of an author. Again, he happens to be the only critic of the three, who shows no sympathy with scientific thought as expressed in the philosophy of evolution. Here again you will sometimes perceive in him a tendency to sneer, and an inclination to belittle a whole class of modern thinkers. But, to his credit, be it observed, that when he comes to judge the books of these thinkers as literature, he is nearly always right. You can safely trust him. A word now about his work. You are aware, I think, that he is the author of a history of Elizabethan literature,<sup>1</sup> of 19th century literature,<sup>2</sup> and of French literature from the beginning even to the present time.<sup>3</sup> This history of French literature is admirably supplemented by a volume of selections from all the great French writers and poets, commencing with Villon and brought up to the latest romantic period.<sup>4</sup> He has also given us several volumes of essays—the last of which *Corrected Impressions*<sup>5</sup> well shows the sincerity of the man who is not afraid to revise in age the judgment of his youth. Besides the work already mentioned, representing about eight volumes, we have a history of English literature, in one volume, for the use of students;<sup>6</sup> the best thing of its kind in existence. Yet all these represent little of his work as an editor. For a number of years past he has been engaged in producing what is at present the greatest history of literature in any modern language. Before his time the great authority upon comparative European literature was Hallam. Hallam did about as much as any man could have attempted in the early part of the 19th century; he studied the whole range of European literature, during several centuries, much after the fashion that Gibbon studied history. But he really tried to do what was beyond the power of mortal man—the subject was

<sup>1</sup> *A history of Elizabethan literature* 1887.

<sup>2</sup> *A history of nineteenth century literature* 1896.

<sup>3</sup> *A short history of French literature* 1882.

<sup>4</sup> *Specimens of French literature from Villon to Hugo* 2nd edn 1892.

<sup>5</sup> *Corrected impressions: essays on Victorian writers* 1895.

<sup>6</sup> *A short history of English literature* 1898.

too vast. Saintsbury knew this; and knew that a comparative history of European literature could only be successfully undertaken by a score of people working under a single direction. He chose the men, began the work, has carried it nearly to completion; and his great history, entitled *Periods of European Literature*, will not only render Hallam altogether obsolete, but will be almost impossible to supersede. Hereafter, it is probable that all histories of national literature must be the work of a coterie of specialists. The expansion of the field has made such work too large for the achievement of one man. But, you must remember that the study of literature by the student must be correspondingly changed. In the future it will not be enough for him merely to know the value of a particular book; he must know the relation of that book to all books of the same class; and he must study the movement of literature as a series of great waves passing over the sea of European intellectual life.

### GOSSE

I do not say that Mr. Saintsbury is pleasant to read; though he is very necessary to read. He does not try to be pleasant, but to be exact. It is quite different in the case of Professor Edmund Gosse.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gosse probably equal to Mr. Saintsbury as a scholar, happens to be something which Mr. Saintsbury is not, a poet. Mr. Saintsbury can scarcely be said to have a particular style; Mr. Gosse is probably the greatest living master of English style. To read him is to read the most delicate and beautiful English which the 19th century produced since the days of Ruskin. For we must compare the romantic only with the romantic; and Mr. Gosse is a master of romantic style. You will not find this quality of style so marked in his *History of Eighteenth Century Literature*.<sup>2</sup> It was necessary that this volume should have been very compactly written; and he wrote

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edmund William Gosse (1849-1928).

<sup>2</sup> 1889.

it in almost the same precise method as that of Saintsbury. But in his volumes of essays and in his beautiful *Modern English Literature*,<sup>1</sup> you will find poetry in prose—poetry of the rhythmical and imaginative form. The volumes of his essays which I should particularly recommend you to read are *Gossip in a Library*,<sup>2</sup> *Seventeenth Century Studies*,<sup>3</sup> *Questions at Issue*,<sup>4</sup> *Northern Studies*,<sup>5</sup> and *Critical Kit-Kats*.<sup>6</sup> These volumes of essays cover a great variety of subjects—Elizabethan and 17th century books; Scandinavian literature (on which Mr. Gosse is an authority); modern poetry and American literature; modern essayists and novelists; living celebrities, such as Rudyard Kipling and Mr. Meredith. Mr. Gosse, unlike his brother critics, is not afraid to express an opinion about living writers. He is now, in a sort, the literary king of his time,—the one English man, who by word can make a literary reputation. It is the ambition of all literary aspirants to get noticed by Mr. Gosse. Naturally only a few are thus gratified; but we may say that no man has used greater literary influence in a more generous way than Mr. Gosse, or in a more impartial way. It matters nothing to him what evil is spoken about a young writer, or about his life, or about his work, when he comes to judge the work. If there be beauty there and strength, he will say so; and that ends the matter. Perhaps really it requires a poet and a great stylist to do these generous things—that is, a man in whom the sense of literary beauty is very great. The charm of his essays is almost independent of the subject. I mean, that even if you have not read the books that he is talking about, his essays will make you want to read them. Now the most useful of all guides for a literary student with a taste for letters, is the man who will tell him what to read,—what will amuse him, what will delight him, what will give him the pleasure of mystery and the pleasure of fear. Better than any one else Mr. Gosse does this. Mr. Saintsbury will teach you how to form accurate judgment; but he will not teach you how to love the book and the man that wrote it. Mr. Gosse will do that; and so great is the variety of his essays, that no matter

<sup>1</sup> 1897.<sup>2</sup> 1891.<sup>3</sup> 1883.<sup>4</sup> 1893.<sup>5</sup> 1879.<sup>6</sup> 1886.

what your tastes may be, you are almost certain to find something there that will gratify them. Of Mr. Gosse as a poet, I cannot speak so enthusiastically. He has written a number of volumes of poetry; *In Russet and Silver*,<sup>1</sup> *New Poems*,<sup>2</sup> and *Firdausi in Exile*<sup>3</sup> are the best known; and there are others. Mr. Gosse's poetry is always good, always scholarly; but he does not pretend to be a great poet, or even a professional poet; and his poetry represents for the most part only studies in form. His mastery in form is unquestioned; but that is all—and his value to you should be that of a great critic and a matchless essayist. I doubt whether, of essays, any essays better than those of Mr. Gosse have been produced in the 19th century. It is probable that he will shortly undertake a history of English literature that will be far superior to anything ever attempted before. The work will probably be accomplished by forty or fifty scholars working under his direction; and I am sorry to say that it will necessarily be rather expensive.

#### DOWDEN

Professor Dowden<sup>4</sup> comes very close to Professor Gosse as a writer, but not quite. Some of his books, I think, you know. He has produced several volumes of essays,—on English, German and French subjects; and he is the author of a famous *Life of Shelley*<sup>5</sup>—more famous perhaps, because of the manner in which it was sharply criticized by Matthew Arnold in one of his celebrated essays. Mr. Dowden was a young man at the time when he published his *Life of Shelley*; and perhaps to-day he would not write the book in exactly the same way. But in spite of Matthew Arnold, that book remains the standard biography and there is no fault to be found with its accuracy. Mr. Dowden is not so frequently an essay writer as Mr. Gosse; but when he does attempt an essay, he can be almost equally

<sup>1</sup> 1894.  
<sup>5</sup> 1886.

<sup>2</sup> 1879.

<sup>3</sup> 1885.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Dowden (1843-1913).

charming and equally instructive. If you will take one of the volumes entitled *Studies in Literature*,<sup>1</sup> you will find how very educating an effect the reading of any one of them will have. It is as if the writer gave us new eyes to see with; and, in the matter of appreciation, this is exactly what a great critic should do. Here we may close our course of English literature,—the great general facts having all been touched upon. Nothing remains but to present a little summary of 19th century literary history, and that we shall do the next day.

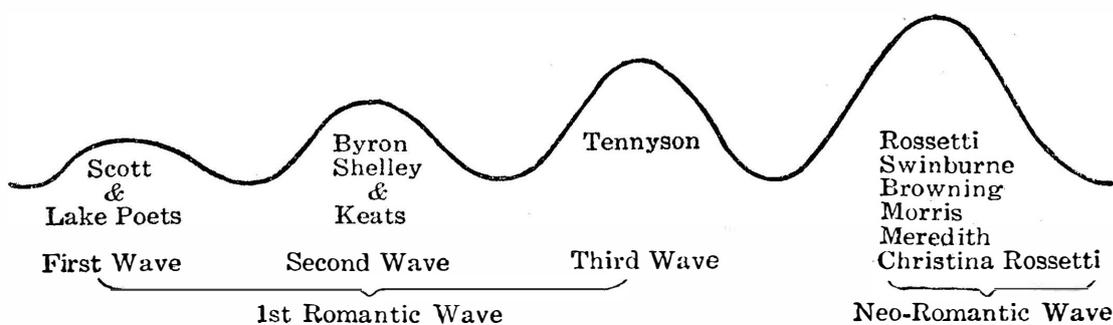
### SUMMARY

Let us now very briefly review the general history of 19th century literature.

First of all, it is best to remember that this whole century especially represents the period of “Romantic Triumph,” as it has been called,—that is to say, the complete breaking down of the old classic rules, ideas, and restrictions, both in poetry and in prose.

The second thing to remember is that it can be conveniently divided into two periods—pre-Victorian and Victorian,—the Victorian period representing considerably more than the latter half of the century: we might say more than sixty years.

The undulations of the movement are more noticeable in poetry than in prose—at least they are more easily memorized.



The first wave of romantic feeling—fresh but weak—is represented by the names of Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge,

<sup>1</sup> *Studies in literature 1789-1877* 1878.

and Southey—the last three of whom have been usually called the Lake Poets. The second was stronger by far,—the wave which broke down the last classical barriers was impelled by Byron, Shelley, and Keats. The third, and the largest wave of all, can be sufficiently indicated by a single name—that of Tennyson. When Tennyson appeared, to perfect everything, the time of struggle was passed. But at the name of Tennyson there comes a long pause. He represented the period of fruition,—the great peace after the storm. And we may say that the first romantic epoch ends with him. But one more wave was to come — and the larger one — the neo-romantic wave, represented by the names of Rossetti, Swinburne, Browning, Morris, Meredith, and Christina Rossetti. This new romantic movement really revived mediæval romance, and enriched English poetry with foreign material before unknown. Its effect has only recently begun to die away.

So you could represent the changes in English poetry by one undulating line representing four waves—the third a little larger than the other preceding two. Nevertheless the students should be able to remember some of the names that represent exceptions to the general current—such as those of Matthew Arnold and of Robert Bridges. Here were two men, who, in the most romantic time, still clung to certain classical ideas, and did not allow themselves to be swept away with the feeling of the age.

In prose, as I said, the change was less marked. But you can easily remember that prose obtained its highest perfection in two distinct forms — a romantic form, and a very simple form, having the severity of classic style without classic convention. Of romantic writers pure and simple—innovators in style—the most remarkable was Carlyle; the most poetically romantic was Ruskin. But the best way to remember would be for you to drop the distinctions of classic and romantic in regard to prose; and to substitute for them “ornate style” and “plain style.” Even Macaulay, with his classic tendencies, would have to be put among the writers of “ornate” prose. Indeed the only very great writers of “plain” prose worth re-

membering are Froude and Pater; Pater showing tendencies occasionally to romantic directions.

So you will remember without difficulty that, just as in poetry there are two names representing conservatism, there are two names in prose representing conservatism. But these forms of conservatism were not at all rigid—they rejected ornament only for the purpose of obtaining greater strength.

Of course you should remember that the 19th century has been the great period of fiction,—that every kind of novel was brought to perfection before the last twenty-five years of the Queen's reign. If possible, try to memorize such names as those of Thackeray, Dickens, Bulwer-Lytton, Charles Reade, Wilkie Collins, Anthony Trollope, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans);—for each of these gave us a new form of novel. Out of ten thousand novels since written, there are scarcely any which does not represent some combination of the methods first introduced by these. I have not dwelt upon Scott, who belongs to both centuries; but you should remember to identify Scott with the growth of English historical romance.

As for history, remember that this is not a historical class; it is a literary class, and our lectures regarding historians deal with them only in relation to literature. In literature remember the histories of Macaulay, of Carlyle, and of Froude. These are the three great and monumental figures in the true literature of history. Each one of them discovered a new way of writing history; and you ought to be able to state something about the respective methods of all.

There are men too, who belong to several departments of literature, not only to one; and you ought to be able to think about them in their various aspects. For example, you have Kingsley as a novelist, or at least as a writer of romance; you have Kingsley as a writer of delightful books for children; and you have Kingsley as a poet and a song writer. Again you have Symonds the historian; Symonds the essayist; and Symonds the translator and poet. Figures like these ought not to be allowed to fade from memory.

And if possible, try to keep in mind one general fact in re-

gard to the division of English fiction into *Romance* and *Novel*. You must remember that the romance and the novel are not the same thing, and must not be classed together. The first great romance of the century was the work of Scott; the last that of Stevenson. That is not hard to remember. The difficulty will meet you only when you are asked questions about writers who produced both forms: Bulwer-Lytton, for instance. Was he greater as a romance writer or as a novelist? Questions like these I might ask at the examination.

Lastly, do not omit from your mental map of the 19th century literature the action of science upon the minds of men. At no time in the whole history of literature has the mental transformation been so sudden or so large. If possible, try to remember what writers, in poetry or in fiction, especially represent the new idea.