

mate friend Harvey. Further, one would expect to find the records of the birth of Spenser's children at this period not at St. Clement Danes, but in the neighbourhood of Dublin or Kilcolman. The poet had been in Ireland at least ever since July, 1586. How, then, could his wife have a daughter in England in August, 1587? We leave the explanation to Mr. Collier.

Mr. Routledge's "*Faëry Queen*" is in some respects well fitted for a popular edition. The type is large and clear, the binding elegant and showy. The intending purchaser is informed on the title-page that the illustrations are by "E. Corbould," and the unwary therefrom infer that "E. Corbould" must be a distinguished artist, and that his illustrations will correspond with his fame. But a very slight acquaintance with the interior of the volume will be sufficient to convince him of the rashness of this inference. Not only are the illustrations inferior to what the most poverty-stricken imagination can conceive for itself, but they are flagrantly at variance with the story which they profess to explain. If anything can make us look with leniency on Mr. Corbould's "illustrations," it is the "*Life of Spenser*" by T. A. B. Who this gentleman may be we are not at all anxious to know; but from what he has thought fit to communicate in his "*Life*" we may conclude that he lived somewhere about the middle or beginning of last century. The most benevolent of readers can look at his performance only with pity, contempt, and disgust—pity for his ignorance, contempt for his pretension, and disgust at the combination. Like all Mr. G. L. Craik's compilations, "*Spenser and his Poetry*" is careful, judicious, and complete; in fact, if taken in small doses, G. L. C. may serve as a useful antidote to T. A. B.



ART. VII.—SOCIAL REFORM IN ENGLAND.

Social Reform in England. By LUCIEN DAVÉSIES DE PONTÈS.
Translated by his Widow. Cassell, Petter, and Galpin.

DUMONT tells us, in his lively and entertaining "*Souvenirs sur Mirabeau*," that during the tedious discussions of the National Assembly, before the new Constitution, an account of our English parliamentary proceedings, drawn up by Romilly, translated by himself into French, and presented to the Assembly by "the greatest of borrowers," as Carlyle calls Mirabeau, was rejected by the members with the cry, "*Nous ne sommes pas les Anglais, et nous n'avons pas besoin des Anglais.*" The speech was characteristic of the men of that time. The book mentioned above is equally characteristic of our

contemporaries in France. By a natural reaction English institutions have become an object of special interest across the Channel, and the results are at least as worthy of study to ourselves as our neighbours. Englishmen should be careful students of such books as that cited above. The views expressed on England by intelligent foreigners have an interest to some extent independent of their merit. They may of course be utterly superficial, and then they do not teach us much; but if they are anything more than this, they teach us almost as much by what they leave unsaid as by what they say. We may discover from the gaps in a foreign account of any English institution, how far it addresses itself to a mind prepared to understand it by any kindred experience, how far the observer is removed from the true position of observation by the manifold influences of familiar association, supplying a train of ideas incongruous with those which, under the same names, perhaps, he seeks to pursue. The present volume of *Essays*—the work of an intelligent and cultivated Frenchman, cut off in the prime of life—presents some examples of this negative kind of excellence. But it has no need to repose its claims to our attention upon them; we know no book from which with equal toil English readers can learn so much of the gradual development of particular social questions, which, with so little pretension, puts before them an equal amount of complete and well-chosen information on the subjects of which it treats. When we have added that these subjects are the Moralization of the Dangerous Classes—a review of our penal legislation during the last twenty years—a History of Pauperism in England, an essay on Women in England, besides two short fragments on our electoral and municipal systems, which are to our thinking the most interesting in the book, we have said enough to show that the volume is one from which we may learn much of that which it is most important to us to know.

Before going on to give any detailed account of its contents, we may extract from the *Notice Biographique*, by his friend M. P. L. Jacob, a short notice of the writer. Lucien Davésies de Pontès was born of a noble but impoverished French family at Orleans in 1806, and died at the close of 1859 at Paris. The fifty-three years which intervened between these dates were occupied with a wide and varied circle of interests, these being always engaged in a peculiar degree by the weak and suffering. His sympathy with the cause of liberty in Greece decided his profession—he entered the French navy, we are told, from a hope of taking a personal share in the Greek war of independence, a hope which seems to have had rather too slight a basis, and to have concerned itself with too temporary a result, to have been altogether a fortunate influence in the choice of a profession. How-

ever, if it was barely realized—for his disappointment in being absent from [the battle of Navarino can only have been partly allayed by a subsequent occasion on which, at the siege of the Castle of Morée, his personal prowess was much remarked—his Mediterranean cruise was not barren of result on his after life. The navy was to him the vineyard of the fable: if he did not find the treasure in gold, his vintage brought it him in another shape. Those years spent among the scenes that recall all that is noblest in the past, which then seemed to link themselves also with hopes of a noble future, must have been the very best conclusion to a thoughtful and studious youth. A French translation of the "Iliad," projected and partly finished at this time, and a series of Letters on Greece, which have been given to the public partly in a collected volume, and of which many appeared, too much modified by the hands of the editors, in the newspapers of the day, were his first literary essays, and attracted much attention.

No doubt the varied and interesting scenes among which he spent these years, gave his mind that bent towards the observation of foreign countries which is noticeable in the mere list of his works—*Etudes sur l'Orient*—*l'Angleterre*—*l'Allemagne*—*l'Italie*, &c. Where a strong interest is roused in any individual nation, the whole power of observing national peculiarities is quickened; the mind having once crossed the barriers that separate one people from another, finds these barriers less impassable even when the strong attraction which at first overcame them exists no longer. The temporary and accidental reasons, however, which had induced him to enter the navy, could not endow him with any love for it as a profession—the irksomeness which most men find in a sea life was oppressive to him, and he found, as might be expected, little congenial society in his companions. "I have passed weeks and months in entire solitude," he writes to his brother in 1834: "those on board are so incapable of sympathizing with me that I am alone in the midst of the hum they keep up about me." He left the navy in the following year, and spent the rest of his public life as *sous-préfet* at various towns in the south of France, a career which, if it hardly fulfilled all that his friends hoped for him, seems to have occasioned many grateful recollections among those over whose interests he was the guardian. It was interrupted for a time by the events of 1848; he was, from motives which no reader of his book will confound with indifference to liberty, opposed to democracy, and seems to have regarded Napoleonism as a necessary evil. That such men as the writer of "*Social Reform in England*" regard Louis Napoleon as the saviour of France is a fact not, we think, altogether to be passed over in our judgment of the Emperor. They may be wrong, but they must have something to say for themselves. M.

de Pontès did not confine his support to words ; the vigorous measures to which his arrondissement owed, as M. Jacob tells us, its preservation from anarchy in 1852, was the cause of a grateful address from the inhabitants of the town where he was sous-préfet. "We will leave to others to celebrate his benevolence," they said, "it is for us to bear witness to the courage and resolution which have saved us in this most critical moment." In spite of this testimony, he did not attain the promotion to which he seemed so justly entitled, and we must own that any eulogy by him on the government of Louis Napoleon was entirely disinterested. Domestic happiness came in to fill the blank of public occupation ; he married in 1852 a countrywoman of our own ; and from the slight details which are given in the Notice, we gather that the years of retirement which concluded his life formed its happiest portion. He was devoted to literature and to philanthropy, he had become a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul ; and these occupations, together with intercourse with devoted friends, formed, we should imagine, a welcome change from the administrative details of a provincial town. He was the intimate friend of Villemain and Augustin Thierry, and the death of the latter seems to have been the only sorrow of his later years.

We turn from the man to the work which his widow, collecting and translating the papers which originally appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, has given the English public. The faults we have to find with it are exclusively those of omission. We have been disappointed, occasionally, not to find more indication of the writer's own opinion on the subjects of which he was treating. Here and there a remark occurs which seems to suggest distinct and completely formed views upon them, but he hastily passes on to unfold the facts which have given occasion to the expression, and leaves us to form our own opinion. It sounds a paradoxical complaint, but this method, observed too rigidly, hardly gives that stimulus which the memory requires in following out a path so devious and entangled as the history of an institution. The historian may, in such a case, be *too* impartial for the demands of history. Some strong sympathy is almost necessary to give that moral unity which a nation possesses of right, to the more complex and obscure combinations which are represented by the portion of legislation, for instance, bearing on such a subject as the state of the poor. But here, again, we may repeat the remark with which we started. This very defect has its value. It illustrates the bias of a thoughtful mind formed under French influence ; it makes us feel, for such a mind, the overwhelming importance of history, the excessive attention which it is likely to bestow upon the development of an idea in the past. We say deliberately, the *excessive* attention. Let us

justify the word by an example. In the article on the comprehensive subject of *Women in England* (on which we have much to say), about a third of the whole is occupied with a "rapid sketch of the history of the women of England, from the most ancient times to the present day." There is much in this sketch that is valuable; but it appears to us, as referring to the discussion in which it appears, almost irrelevant. The women of England in ancient times were no more the ancestors of the women of England in the present day, than their brothers were. Each woman, as she receives the whole transmitted tendencies of her male and female ancestry alike, so she transmits them with a like impartiality to her posterity. A mother is of no nearer kin to her daughters than her sons. Indeed, this introductory sketch, as rather tending to foster that curious habit of mind which leads people to think, or at least to talk, as Miss Emily Davies has well said, "as if women were a tribe apart from the rest of the nation, transmitting their peculiarities among themselves"—(a tendency, however, which it is quite obvious M. de Pontès did not himself share)—seems to us rather to lead the mind away from a position for true judgment of the question. So far, of course, we regard this historic point of view as a mistake. But what a valuable mistake!—how full is such an error of instruction for those who can trace it to its true cause. M. de Pontès belongs to a nation which has broken with the past. To quote his own graphic words:

"In France the nation always begins by pulling down the edifice from the roof to the foundation-stone, in order to construct something superior in beauty and regularity. That half the inhabitants should be buried under the ruins is, of course, inevitable; but that is of no importance. The building will be superb; there will be people enough to fill it by and by" (p. 385.)

And he goes on to contrast the French and English method of reform, in a tone of admiration for the latter, which we wish we could feel entirely deserved. But we quote the passage here to explain what we have called the excessively historic tendency of his mind. He belongs to a nation which has seen half its members perish under the ruins of the building it rased in order to improve; he looks too favourably on the neighbour who is slowly, and with elaborate carefulness of every plank, enlarging a cow-shed into a banqueting hall. He would have sympathised, perhaps, with Mr. Matthew Arnold's member of Parliament who thought that for anything to be an anomaly was no objection at all—he would at all events have been more at one with him than with his critic. Indeed, we might choose Mr. Arnold and M. de Pontès as examples respectively of those characteristic specimens of the two nations to which they belong, which are formed by reaction. Nathaniel Hawthorne, to turn to a very different sphere, would represent a similar specimen for America. When Mackin-

tosh, with all the ardour and ignorance of youth, applauded in the "*Vindiciæ Gallicæ*" the Constituent Assembly for the bold sweep they had made of the growth of centuries in order to substitute for them the production of a night, he was exhibiting in a different and a stronger form the tendencies of the present volume—the reaction from what is familiar. Such a tendency, working in a thoughtful Frenchman of the present day, will naturally make him over-historical.

For these reasons we look upon that portion of the volume as most valuable where the historic element seems most in place; this we find in the *Essay on the History of Pauperism in England*. Here again, however, we are led to the regret we have already expressed, that the writer, from an evident impression that the facts speak for themselves, has left us to gather his own views so much from incidental allusions. He begins his sketch by the remark that "had the history of the English Poor Law been better known in France in 1848, when the country was agitated by social questions of all descriptions, the radical vices of the doctrine which proclaims the right to labour would at once have been recognised, from the result of the experience of 800 years on the other side of the Channel." We can hardly find this lesson in the sketch (p. 136), which follows. It contains the instruction which all clear presentation of historic facts must possess, but we hardly see in it a conclusive decision either for the French or the English theory of relief. We cannot imagine a more interesting work for the historian than a comparison of the development of the two countries as they are contrasted in their treatment of social questions—exhibiting on the one hand a vast subterranean force gradually upheaving the soil through the course of centuries, or, when manifesting itself in shocks of earthquake, such as the Civil War and the Revolution of 1688, exerting so little destructive power that, when alarm was past, the landmarks of the country remained unchanged; and on the other hand, that same force condensed into one tremendous explosion, which shattered in an hour the erections of centuries, and left the land a desert. The force is identical; the difference is in our happier fate, who were permitted to experience it in successive movements, whilst it came upon our neighbours with the long arrears of ages. Some suggestion of this contrast is indicated by our author in an interesting passage, which we were disappointed to find so short:—

"It is (he says, page 157,) one of the most remarkable features of the English Revolution, that in the sanguinary struggle between the King and the Parliament, with the exception of the confiscations which transferred to the hands of the middle classes a certain proportion of the estates of the Royalist nobility, the rights of property were invariably respected, heavily as they pressed on the mass of the people.

The English Revolution was strictly a political revolution. It was a struggle for liberty, and not for equality—the idea of which never really suggested itself to any of the parties concerned.”

And elsewhere, in a short paper on the Territorial Divisions of Great Britain, he contrasts the distinctive French passion for equality with the English passion for liberty, remarking, in words which have been applied to the same subject before* with a slightly different meaning, that the revolutionary wave, which in England is broken against the impassable barriers of an organized society ascending in regular gradations towards the summit, in France, once lifted by the tempest, finds a dead level exposed to its fury, which is at once submerged. Such suggestions as these are valuable material for the comparison we desire, but we would gladly have had more. However, the very fact that we only discover with difficulty, in following out our author's sketch of an English institution, that he regards the principle on which it is constructed as vicious, is, from one point of view, a high tribute to his moderation and candour. Let us thankfully avail ourselves of these to follow his footsteps in a course even more rapid than his own; and in a summary which pretends to nothing more than being the copy of a copy, endeavour to indicate the tendencies of our Poor Law legislation.

No one who has looked into any detailed portion of history, either of actions or opinions, can have failed to be struck with the gradual character of all national change, as compared with that string of events which, on a superficial view, does duty as history. There is all the difference between the two of looking out a journey on the map, and making it in reality—you see the chain of mountains you are to cross marked in a definite line across the country, but when you come to remember the journey, you cannot recall the moment at which you began the ascent. Thus we are influenced by institutions which, as historic realities, have long since passed away; and thus also we may perhaps be swayed by some vague impulses belonging to a movement which is only to take definite shape in the far future. Throughout a large proportion of English history the lower classes evidently lived in the shadow of slavery.† It is impossible to read the account given by our author of Henry VIII.'s measures against vagrancy (measures which have been impressed on the recollection of every reader by the discussion which followed the publication of Mr. Froude's first volume) without feeling that the poor of that time were still in some sense serfs—inevitably and rightly, it may be said, and that is not a part of the question which is at once apparent, but the fact is unquestionable. When vagrants were condemned to death after the third offence—that

* By Alfred de Vigny.

† Slavery for life was the penalty for vagrancy so late as Edward VI.

offence being possibly a mere quest of work—we cannot regard the culprits as free men. Whether they were enslaved by any actual necessity of that stage of historic development, or by the will of a tyrant, they certainly were in a condition which looked back to slavery as its true type. From this dark spot the Poor Law, through all its earlier stages, takes its dye. It consists of a series of defensive enactments, made to preserve society from those who were regarded as its natural enemies. "Thus, for a long period," says M. de Pontès, "the legislation of pauperism had a character exclusively repressive." (p. 159.) No one can accuse the legislature of the present day of any tendency towards this way of regarding the poor. An enactment regarding the poor, as a class, which was made in our day, would be protective, not repressive. Any one who wished to introduce a new law concerning them would have to justify it by showing that it promoted their welfare, and not merely—indeed, not at all—that it protected the upper classes against any inconvenience which they might undergo from the pressure of those below them. Here, then, is a total change of principle in our treatment of pauperism; and, according to this change, the history would divide itself into two periods—the first of repressive, the second of protective legislation. The passing over of the centre of gravity from the welfare of the rich, who were to be defended, to the welfare of the poor, who were to be protected, was a change which cannot be identified with any historic event, but we may certainly regard it as fully completed in the law known as "Gilbert's Act," which was only repealed in 1834, and which, without harshness, might be described as an arrangement for the encouragement of pauperism. Of the other view of the pauper, in which he is regarded as an enemy, the law above quoted, of 1536, by which the vagrant was to be whipped for the first and second offence, and hanged for the third, is an equally typical instance. When we come to trace the boundary between the two, or rather to the discovery that this is impossible, we are somewhat perplexed at the suddenness of the transition. Gilbert's Act, passed in 1782, was separated from the oppressive Act of Settlement by only one hundred and twenty years; and some of the harshest of the defensive measures against vagrancy are due to the youth of the eighteenth century. But the suddenness of this reaction is very much what we might expect. It is a repetition of the change we have witnessed in our penal legislation almost in our own day—the natural recoil from harshness to petting, to which a nation like ours, so indifferent to principles, so careless of anything that cannot justify itself as practical in some exclusive sense, is peculiarly liable. Having treated the poor man as an enemy, it was a natural change to treat him as a child. It is not difficult to

modify arrangements made for the coercion of particular individuals into arrangements for their protection ; and it is at all times easier for the English to modify arrangements than to investigate the principles on which they are founded.

The history of the Poor Law, then, is the history of the gradual substitution, under the same outward form, of one principle for another. It is the history of a great revolution of feeling, working under an unbroken continuity of system. We are now trying to effect, with the instruments used by our forefathers for a particular purpose, the exact opposite of that purpose. We go on applying to those whom we seek to raise into the condition of free men, the laws which Henry the Eighth made for those who were contemplated as serfs, and hamper ourselves, in our regulations for the infirm and aged, with the precautions which our forefathers took to preserve themselves against bands of formidable marauders.*

To what purpose, it may be asked, this discussion concerning a principle which is now embodied in the English constitution ? Can it be supposed that we shall remodel our whole workhouse system, whatever theory we take of the right to relief ? Certainly we should not, and we perhaps ought not. There are institutions which it would be as disastrous to remove as it was originally to set up. All that can be done in such a case is to make the best of a bad bargain. But let it not be thought that it is in such cases idle to assert that they never should have been set up. It is a grave error, in every department of life, to refuse to recognise a principle on which, for the moment, it is best not to act—an error replete with practical result. That result is the very opposite of the natural presumption that we shall carry out a line of action more heartily if we shut our eyes to the fact that though we must go through with it now, we should never have entered upon it at all. The man who says, distinctly and firmly, "Let us complete what should never have been begun," is far more likely to complete the business satisfactorily, far less likely to be deterred from doing so by the fresh discovery of inevitable

* It has been remarked by one who has devoted her care and time to ameliorating the condition of our workhouse poor, that "the very title of workhouses has become singularly inapplicable to the class of persons who actually occupy them. It was well to deter the strong and the idle from living upon the substance of others by the threat of *work* . . . but for the two classes who now form almost exclusively the population of our parish institutions, the name of workhouse has no meaning."—(Journal of the Workhouse Visiting Society, No. XXVII. p. 109.) Is not the name here singularly symbolic of the thing ? Is not the series of anomalies which forms the result a weighty comment on our contempt of principles, our horror of ideas ? Is not our workhouse system a practical refutation of the English belief, "that for anything to be an anomaly is no objection to it at all ?"

disadvantages resulting from it, than he who refuses to entertain the question whether it was well to initiate anything which it is not well to destroy. The first knows what to aim at, for the second success means disappointment. Truth is never barren. The sentence one hears so often, for our part, generally, with a recollection of Sydney Smith's "Noodle's Oration," that such and such ideas are well enough in theory, but would never do in practice, is one of those convenient formulas which cover an utter blank of thought. It is an elaborate way of saying that the speaker thinks a proposed measure a mistake, and does not know why. Do not let us make use of such formulas in any discussion concerning the welfare of millions.

In the present instance it appears to us by no means impossible to imagine cases in which the immediate effect of any recognition of principle should be important. For instance (and we give the example merely as an instance, having no right to speak with any authority of the facts upon which the decision must be made), it has engaged the attention of some of those who by the patient devotion of years have earned the right to an attentive hearing of all the suggestions they originate, whether the plan of our workhouses might not be so modified that some part of the inhabitants might not pay a small sum for their support, and obtain, of course, equivalent advantages. In fact, the only alteration proposed is that they should obtain these advantages, for the payment is, in many cases, made already. There is rather a numerous class of domestic servants, &c., who have saved a little money, or have a small pension, enough to live upon as long as they require no attendance, but totally inadequate as soon as they are overtaken by infirmity. For such persons there is no refuge but the workhouse, and the effect of the lesson given by their reception on a level with the other inmates—of the money being taken, and the person who pays it treated as a pauper—need hardly be suggested.

We can imagine many of the difficulties in the way of such a project—they may be insuperable; but if we once establish that our whole poor-law theory is wrong, that the duty of supporting the indigent is not one to be undertaken by the State, it is manifest that such a step, if it could be made, would be in the right direction. All the evils which arise from the obligatory system would be more or less counterbalanced by such a modification as would be brought about in it by the reception of those who are not indigent. In the first place, the well-to-do son or daughter, who could not receive his or her parents into a house full of children would have a middle course between completely withholding all assistance from them, and making such sacrifices as would be necessary to give them an independent home. In the second, the distinction within the walls of

the workhouse of those who were and were not contributing to their own support, would have a healthy influence, we cannot but think, on the estimate in which the latter were held. In the third, and chiefly—for the two first evils would, we fear, be very slightly touched by any influences of this nature—such an arrangement would give the first break-up to that dead level which on our present system we must assign to all workhouse relief. It would create a gradation in the walls of the workhouse. It would tend towards that division of the recipients of parish relief, that higher organization of the machinery by which it is given, which is itself a partial receding from a position which, if the view we have advocated be true, is a false one.

Once establish payment wards in a workhouse, and you would introduce the small end of the wedge of a new system. You would make the workhouse less of a workhouse, you would introduce into it a new class, would partition off a small strip, as it were, over which the shadow of degradation could not extend. You would put on record a practical confession that here was an anomalous system, and that the true improvement was to recede.

There are, we believe, great difficulties in the way of the adoption of such a system, and we are not expressing any opinion as to their validity. But it is impossible to approach the perplexities and anomalies of our poor-law, and not feel that the one primary difficulty in the way of all such reform is the fact that we are working a system intended to defend us *against* the poor, for their protection. We have tried to bend and twist an instrument intended for one purpose, so as to fit it for another diametrically opposite one. Here we suffer for the qualities which thoughtful Frenchmen admire in us. We are too obstinately historic.

The article on Pauperism, of which we have endeavoured to give a slight abstract, appears to us, on the whole, the most valuable in the volume—that on the comprehensive subject of Women in England occupies the other end of our scale. In proportion to its bulk, and the work expended on it, it seems to us, for reasons which we have partly given, the least satisfactory of the essays. Still it is well worth reading, and as a clear, unprejudiced, if not always unexaggerated, comprehensive *résumé* of the chief facts concerning that movement which culminates in the Petition for the Enfranchisement of Women, discussed elsewhere, it will gain, as time turns it into history, an even stronger interest than that which it possesses at present. That interest is heightened by the fact told us by M. Jacob, that M. de Pontès was attracted to the school of St. Simon, in his youth, chiefly by its advocacy of the cause of women. His interest in the cause of social reform seems, in fact, to have been in a great measure kindled by his intercourse with the apostles of this school, for whom, after intimate knowledge, he professed the warmest admiration. The

equality of man and woman, proclaimed by its apostles, was at that time (1834) a doctrine full of attraction to him. When he wrote the article on Woman in England, some twenty years later, his views were somewhat modified, and he observed that "the word equality, in its absolute sense, could scarcely be applied to moral and intellectual beings" (p. 253). The "Woman question" takes a somewhat different aspect in France to that which it presents in our own country, and we are liable to some misapprehension in estimating any expression of opinion educed from a Frenchman, even by a study of our own social tendencies, on a subject so complex as the present. We may say, however, that if we take as our extremes the view of women taken by Mr. J. S. Mill and that taken by the *Saturday Review*, M. de Pontès would in theory come very much nearer the former than the latter, but yet we trace in practical matters a half-conscious leaning to that way of looking at the subject which treats it as something anomalous and exceptional that women should, for instance, earn their own living, which, if quite consistent, would find in her no more than the appendage to and complement of man. An illustration of this, which to some readers, perhaps, will seem far-fetched, is the great stress he lays on emigration. "What means can be taken," he asks, after speaking of the surplus of 500,000 of the female over the male population in England, "to re-establish to a certain degree the numerical balance of the sexes?"—and goes on, of course, to give the only answer which, without recourse to a miracle, can be given—emigration. We do not think this would have been urged by him as a desirable expedient, if he had been more intimate with the life of Englishwomen, or if he had not been led to a very natural exaggeration of a valuable privilege which no Continental nation possesses in the same degree as ourselves. Expatriation can never be welcome but as a refuge from misery—most Englishwomen would rather live on a very little than cease to be Englishwomen. But let that pass: it cannot be denied that the means is necessary if we are to attain the end, for as we cannot put our 500,000 surplus women to death, there is no other way of getting rid of them. But why are we to "re-establish the numerical balance of the sexes?" Unless we want to pair them all off, there seems no other obvious necessity for their equality. Those 500,000 women, if they are to remain unmarried, would not be a bit the better off for having 500,000 men competing with them in engraving, watchmaking, bookbinding, and the other trades which M. de Pontès suggests as equally suited to them with their brothers. If it is a misfortune to a woman that she has to stand alone, then lose no time in despatching her to some

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region where she is likely to find a helpmate. But that is the very question to be answered—a question to which it is evident from other portions of the essay M. de Pontès was not aware that he had implied an affirmative answer. Indeed the affirmative answer is implied so often that we do not wonder it has acquired a somewhat axiomatic aspect. There is a veneer of obviousness which hides many a falsehood, and perhaps, after all, what looks so unanswerable as the statement which M. de Pontès makes in its most moderate form, that either sex is incomplete alone, may be so understood as to contain an entire and pernicious error.

That an error, if such exists, as to the position of women, is of greater importance than any other social mistake, is an assertion surely established by pointing out the obvious fact, not always remembered in these discussions, that women constitute half the human race. Yet it might be strengthened. Women do not only constitute one-half the human race, they supply much more than half the influences by which it is moulded. But it is hardly necessary to dwell on this part of the question. Till it is alleged that women form an insignificant fraction of the community, it will hardly be urged that any claim put forward by them is unimportant. Whether or not it is unreasonable is a different question—one which our author hardly undertakes to decide, and we do not intend to touch. After allowing something for the exaggeration with which women are likely to regard alike “the wrongs they endure and the privileges they claim” (p. 251), he gives it as his opinion that “they have more than their just share in the ills of humanity;” and this opinion, if we may substitute *equal* for *just*, is our own; for we cannot take it as an axiom that an unequal share of these ills is an unjust share of them, for sexes any more than for individuals. It is not unjust, for instance, that women should find it harder to earn their living than men, unless this is a result that men can help. Whether they can do so, is a question on which the present volume does not throw much light. To our thinking, it is not the first question which has to be asked in the matter. What kind of work is best suited to women, how far the sphere of their activity may be enlarged to include occupations hitherto monopolized by their husbands and brothers, what modifications in their education would best fit them to play their parts, are questions of great importance, in which an error must be corrected at a great cost; and any contribution to the data on which they are to be answered, therefore, is to be received with all gratitude. But they are all questions of means, subordinate to the question concerning the object of life. This object a woman is supposed to find in some peculiar sense in family life. The writer of a sensible

little collection of hints to young women, on work among the poor, assumes as an axiom that this, or some analogous sphere, *must* form the object of a woman's life; that whereas a man may spend himself for art, science, or literature, a woman *cannot* find any object of toil and desire but the immediate help of other human beings. And our most distinguished poet makes her the "perfect music," which, we are left to understand, is incomplete if it is not set to "noble words." The author under our notice means much the same, probably, in the following words:—

"What purpose can be served by placing in mutual antagonism two sexes which Providence has created to lend each mutual aid and support? The individual must always be an incomplete being; it is love alone that perfects him (*il s'achève par l'amour*). God has assigned a special part to each of his creatures; woman's mission differs in many respects from man's. But difference does not imply inferiority; on the contrary, it serves to draw still closer the bonds of mutual affection, and to maintain peace and harmony in the relations of daily life."—p. 254.

These words were singled out for special admiration in a notice of the French edition of the work; and the reader is wondering, probably, that we can find in them matter for anything but entire agreement. "The individual must always be an incomplete being," is a truth so profound that it extends a certain force to every sentence which can be brought into the context with it. "The coal without the fire," it has been finely said, "is a man trying to exist in himself," and the experience of every human being is a commentary on the deep wisdom of those words. Nevertheless, the version of M. de Pontès, following on the assertion that "the two sexes are created to afford each other mutual aid and support," and implying that man and woman are two halves of a perfect whole which cannot be divided without injury—that neither he nor she standing apart from each other have any integral completeness in his or her nature—seems to us to lean towards that theory which apporions her a sort of adjective existence, needing the substantive correlate of the other sex to give her completeness, which we hold to be the most unfortunate illusion of our day.

If people thought in discussing the question not of an abstract woman with a capital W, but of the concrete individuals they see going about the streets, this way of talking would at once strike them as out of harmony with fact. They would think of A., B., and C., who are married, and D., E., and F., who are single; and would perceive that A. was quite as unlike B. as she was to D.; that you could not take these six human beings and divide them into the complete and the incomplete. There are *characters* which cannot stand alone without loss, and possibly

they may be commoner among women than among men. But we shall err grievously, injuriously, if we set up this character as a pattern to young women, if we make them feel that the pursuit of independent aims of their own is, *per se*, unwomanly. "Life for others," as it is often understood, is the bane of many a noble woman's life. It is not a question of giving help where help is wanted, of doing something that has to be done; it is often a frittering away of time, and energy, and thought, in three people helping each other to do something that one of them could manage perfectly well alone; it is a constant hankering after an occupation sometimes as much beyond the capacity of the aspirant as painting pictures like Turner, or writing sonatas like Beethoven. Few people can estimate the gain to female education which would be the result of a complete emancipation from this theory of helpfulness being the specially womanly duty—the dim vague lives that would grow clear, the petty scruples that would vanish like cobwebs under a watering-pot, the hours of morbid introspection that might be exchanged for bracing work, if only we would teach our daughters that, whatever else the work might be which was in common to all, it was at least various. Society, like every other organism, specializes its members as it rises in the scale of development; but we, in our theories about women, do our best to retard this development, and to force half the human race into the mistake which would be made by any man who copied a monkey, and tried to use his feet and hands indifferently. The number of women who are by this theory arrested at the polype stage can never be known; but we believe that a majority of the sour, purposeless, *manqué* lives which every one allows to contain the material for average maternity, contains also the material for a much more various product, if we would but set ourselves to educe it. And we shall never do so till we have laid aside the theory that women are to be helpers.

We shall appear, no doubt, to be laying a very exaggerated stress on the importance of theories.

"The women who are adjusting themselves before the mirror of any theory of their relation to others," it will be replied to us, "may be left to that profitable occupation without any loss to the work of the world; those who have found something better will not be helped by any justification of the work that justifies itself." Both clauses of the assertion are untrue. Those women who have and have not found their work, alike need the guidance of true ideas concerning it. The mere intellectual reception of such ideas will be a gain; but an intellectual decision as to the aims of life represents but a small part of the result brought about by a true appreciation of those aims. It is the organic

modification of the whole character under such an appreciation that forms the true test as to its importance. Is it a trifling question, therefore, whether such a theory is true? We fail to appreciate the influence of particular ideas when we test them by their power to affect the decision at any given crisis of life. They have made the crisis possible. They supply the light by which we see the divergent paths between which they do not enable us to decide. Our feeling about women prevents the desire among them for varied development. Those who are moulded under this influence, if they are high-minded and modest, hanker after philanthropic work ; if they are wanting in that nice sense of modesty which makes an approach to such a position impossible even in wish, hanker after the position of a wife. In neither case are their minds at liberty for the pursuits which perhaps they are specially capable of following up to some purpose. For any residue of energy that will be left vacant, we might as well devote ourselves thoroughly to a pursuit as hanker after it. We have fixed rigid limits to the destiny of any human being when we have moulded his desires.

The two divisions of M. de Pontès' work which we have chosen for comment are not connected by mere contiguity. We have not merely selected two portions of independent interest, which may each be taken as fair specimens of the writer's powers, and the subjects on which he exercised them. There is a much closer connexion than this between the question of women's work and the subject of our treatment of the poor, which has of course been exaggerated as often as it has been disregarded. It is almost always exaggerated where it is believed in. When good people get upon this subject they often forget that women are half the human race, that they have among them every variety of taste and capacity, and that to impose upon them as the satisfaction of all, the care of the poor, is quite as unreasonable as it would be to suggest that all men should be lawyers. It would also, we believe, be nearly as inconvenient if it were acted upon ; but, as there is not the slightest chance of any approximation to that result, we dwell rather upon the evil which it does as an unfulfilled suggestion. Few people estimate at their just weight the evils of indecision, or the influence which views of life have in creating it. It is commonly held to be the vice of a weak character. We believe the very reverse to be the truth. At least one ordinary cause of hesitation of will is that width of view, exhibiting the complex good and evil of varied lines of action, which belongs to a nature large enough to be strong. No people are so swift in their decisions as those who wear blinkers. How often the old come in contact with this kind of decision in any joint action with the young ! And yet what

misery this infirmity entails on those who feel it ! How large a part of life it occupies, and occupies to no purpose ! How small a per-centage of effort becomes result in such a character ! Surely, then, if this—which, far more than ambition, deserves to be called the infirmity of noble minds—be an effect so dependent on causes within our own control, it behoves us in all matters that concern the young to suggest and advise with a sense of responsibility ; to beware how we recommend, as right for all, conditions or occupations which we should feel it a mere truism to eulogize as right for some. There will be few men and fewer women who will pass a good life without doing something for their poor neighbours, but there may be a majority of both to whom this will be a mere incident, not without grievous loss to be made the centre of all the arrangements of life. Do not let us perplex or trouble the field of Duty to the young who belong to this majority. We may do so. The young live, to an extent that their elders are apt to forget, in the world of ideas. We may so associate a particular ideal with all that is noblest in life that, when the one is found impracticable, the other is given up with it. We may so fasten a girl's aspirations on a character she is unqualified to fill, that when slow experience has convinced her that these aspirations were ill-placed, she shall conclude that they were superfluous, and renounce all yearnings after a higher life.

We have dwelt so much on this side of the question because an error on this side appears to us an evil as great as it is removable. The theory that woman's work lies among the poor, like the theory of her belonging specially to family life, to which it is allied, is a theory and no more. The evil is that people think so, and if anybody can be made to think otherwise the evil is modified. It is far otherwise with the opposite error—with that which denies to those specially gifted women whose work *does* lie among the poor, the organization and the consideration which would fit them to carry out their work completely. Here the evil appears to us even greater, because poor and rich suffer from it alike ; but words have little influence on it. When an enlightened and liberal journal like the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a journal from which one might have expected rational treatment of any social question, fully allows that "the present system of nursing in our hospitals is unsatisfactory," that it "would be much improved if ladies undertook the supervision of the hospital servants," and that "the establishment of a great number of what are called sisterhoods might contribute to this effect"—and yet opposes the establishments which would mitigate the worst forms of misery human creatures are called upon to bear, because—why ? Because, perhaps, they might prove irregular and fitful in their action, and so aggravate misery in some cases more than

they remove it in others? Some such objection would have strong *primâ facie* evidence in its favour, and would have to be heard and answered with all respect. No, it is nothing of this kind; our objector takes a much broader ground. Because, "as matters now stand, . . . to be a good wife, sister, or mother is, so to speak, the highest ambition of a woman. . . . Recognise and heartily encourage the ascetic monastic system, and you change all this." Yes, you change all this. That to some observers would be the great, though incidental advantage of such a recognition. They would consider that the first benefit of such a change would be that the pillow of the dying might be smoothed by gentle hands, and the long weary hours of those who pray for death might be soothed with gentle words, instead of the kind of services afforded them in our hospitals at present. But they would rate as only second to such a benefit the gain of changing "the highest ambition of a woman" from that of being a good wife and mother to that of filling the highest post a human being can occupy. This result the journalist regards as the price we are to pay. We can only say we are willing to pay a large price to attain it. It sounds well, no doubt, to say that a woman's highest ambition is that of being a good daughter or sister; people do not ask themselves whether we best attain a certain result by making it our highest ambition; and a woman who has fulfilled these functions well is not likely to fail in any other. But you cannot fasten her attention on the domestic relations as including her field of duties in any special and eminent sense, and not make marriage an ideal necessity to her life. All women are born into a family, but the course of life bears them away from it. The natural inevitable conclusion of this domestic theory is, that every woman should pass from the circumference of one family circle to the centre of another. Is that a conclusion which hitherto has borne favourably on the development of woman? and do we wish to intensify its influence in forming her character?

It is almost an injustice to introduce such a question into the review of such a book as that which forms our text. But the truth is, that it is in the illogical moderation in which alone this adjective theory of woman's life is possible to a mind so refined as that of M. de Pontès (who goes no further than to call marriage "the most natural and holy state for the majority of mankind"), that this theory has any influence. The *Saturday Review* school come too near preaching the *duty* of marriage to do much harm. The inference from any very open advocacy of marriage as the woman's true aim is so obvious that women are revolted at it. They do not see that precisely the same inference is to be drawn from any view, however refined, which

looks upon marriage as the "natural and holy state" for man or woman. The moment you decide in favour of one state, you depress the other. Of course if we are to make men and women, married and single, into classes by themselves, and then pronounce upon them, one theory is as good as another. If you are to decide that the class which includes such a man as Charles Lamb, and the much commoner specimen of man who remains single because he would have to give up his cigars if he married, is better or worse than another class almost as various, it does not matter which alternative you choose. The division tells you absolutely nothing, except that the members of conjugal life are not too disagreeable to find a life-long companion; and that attribute appears to us too comprehensive to afford any valuable inference concerning those to whom it applies. Before we proceed to any comparison of the two states, we must make a further subdivision, and separate those who have remained single either because they had no choice, or because they would not imperil their own personal comfort, from those who have chosen solitude because it appeared to them the strait gate that leads to life. Then, we think, we shall not be contradicted in asserting that the average husband or wife is as much below one of these states as he or she is above the other, and that the life which "Englishmen and Protestants" hold in greatest reverence is most nearly approached by those who renounce the keenest and deepest joy this world can give for themselves, that they may make other lives less empty of joy.

Happily, whatever our theories may be, we have not quite lost the power of seeing the beauty of sacrifice when we ourselves are not called upon to make it. We can see that though a kind husband and affectionate father may be good, a man like Charles Lamb was better—we can give our sympathies to the happy wife and our reverence to the devoted daughter, who, that she may cheer the declining years of her own parent, has renounced the hopes of being one herself. But in denying our sympathy to all minor and more complex forms of the spirit exhibited in such actions, we do all in our power to make them impossible. We may so preach the claims of the Family, as to deprive our children of all capacity for the highest form of filial virtue.

"Il y a," says Turgot, "dans les grandes sociétés une foule d'emplois qui ne peuvent être exercés que par les hommes entièrement disponibles;" and he goes on to explain this epithet by pointing out the need of the State for the services of men who are disengaged from all the cares of earning their living. We would apply this assertion to the constitution of society in a much wider sense than it was intended by the writer. A nation which is to play a high and dignified part in the world's history, if

it is to be equal to great emergencies, or even to keep the current of daily life rapid and pure, must possess a reserve who have given no hostages to fortune. Specially we feel this necessity in the case of women. As at present educated (whether this be a quality inherent in their characters we do not decide) there is so much more justice among men than among women, that their action is very much less affected by the fact of being connected by a strong personal bond with a small division of their fellow-creatures. And yet even with them we can all recall instances where this personal bond has told unfavourably on their public duty. But with women this bond affects a much larger portion of the character. A mother is almost necessarily partial, nor can we think that she could ever, without great loss to her family, identify herself with any large object outside of it. A certain amount of sacrifice forms part of her life. Our greatest poetess has represented—

“Some pang laid down for each fresh human life ;
Some weariness in guarding such a life ;
Some coldness from the guarded,”

as the destiny foretold to the first mother for her successors ; and we should call that mother wonderfully happy or wonderfully miserable, who had never felt the full force of these words. But this “pang,” this “weariness,” is, after all, hardly worthy of the name of sacrifice. It is good that a mother should devote herself to her children, and that they should remember all that she goes through in that devotion, but it will not be such a woman who will, in the deepest meaning of the words, deny *herself*. Not only her identification of self with the objects of her devotion, will make any toil or privation endured for them the satisfaction of her desires ; but this identification will preclude toil and privation for any other object. There are sacrifices—sacrifices which may be the channels of blessings to many—that are impossible for any woman who owes herself to her husband and children. Do we wish to make these impossible ? If we do not, let us not go on talking as if in the ideal state all such women would be absorbed in the care of their nurseries. Mr. Gladstone has, in one of his earlier works, a noble passage on the dangers of the corporate spirit, which has struck us as an equally valid protest against our English worship of the domestic hearth :—

“Whilst incorporation (he says) begins well, and in order to its own organic completion lays a powerful repressing hand on the action of selfish appetite . . . yet, as extrinsically regarded, it will have brought into existence a new power, which may be itself greedy, unjust, and aggressive, and perpetuate for the community more and

grosser evils than would have been committed by the feebler means of its members as individuals."

All this, without a grain of exaggeration, we may say of the family. Up to a certain point, no doubt, it "lays a powerful repressing hand upon the action of selfish appetite;" but that point once reached, its tendency, acting on a nature devoid of any counteracting principle, is to foster a kind of vicarious selfishness far more dangerous to the community than that which concerns the mere individual. We could never trust a man's sense of honour quite so far against his son as against himself. The principle of restraint would always need to be a little stronger to shut in vicarious need—in other words, there will always be more disinterested action among those who are unshackled by the bonds of marriage. Shall we go on doing all in our power, not only to limit this class—not only to deaden a man's sense of responsibility in bringing into the world human beings he is unable to support, and blunt a woman's fine feeling where it is most necessary—but to throw a stigma on the condition which is indispensable to a life of self-sacrifice? There is no need to guard against the opposite extreme—there is no fear that marriage will ever meet with insufficient honour. It is the happiest state, and will always, therefore, be the commonest. Let those who are called upon to enter it do so thankfully, but let them remember that there may be a higher life than even that of conjugal joy—a life which few are called to share, but all to revere.

We have somewhat wandered from M. de Pontès in the foregoing remarks, or rather, we have chosen for criticism the creed which we are able to construct only from a few incidental hints here and there, rather than the practical views which he has developed at length. Our sense of the supreme importance of the principle which he hardly perceived to be brought in question must be our excuse for a method of criticism which does not attempt to treat the subject only from the point of view of a particular writer. As the chief interest the subject possessed for him was its bearing upon the condition of uneducated women, he touches lightly on an issue which has absorbed our attention. He speaks on the subject of sisterhoods as all must speak who are not shackled by our "English and Protestant" prejudices; but as a liberal Roman Catholic he perhaps distrusted his sympathies in judging for English women, and hardly dwells on their advantages at the length we should have expected, and for our own part desired, to find this subject treated in an essay on Social Reform.

The true Social Reform in England would be, we believe, that we should return upon the principles of the Reformation,

and recognise what is right and true in that ideal of which asceticism is a perversion. The English Church is called upon in our day for resistance to the central belief of Rome. Would that we might hope to see conjoined with this resistance an adoption of all that is valuable in the faith we are resisting! The Protestant reaction has gone far enough, and too far; we need to be recalled from our sympathy with innocent joy, to reverence for heroic self-sacrifice—from the protest in favour of the common instincts of our nature, to a just appreciation of the higher ideal which average men and women may not be called upon to copy, but are never released from the obligation to revere.

ART. VIII.—REFORM AND REFORMERS.

WE are not inconsolable for the loss of the Reform Bill of Earl Russell's Government. That bill was, what its supporters proclaimed it to be, a thoroughly honest measure. It was not what its opposers persisted in declaring it to be, an uncalled for and extreme instalment of Reform. The Ministers who framed and the members who voted for the bill, sincerely believed it to be a scheme which, if neither perfect nor complete, would yet satisfy the just demands of a large number of the unenfranchised multitude, and settle the question of Reform for a long series of years. It was a bill which every genuine reformer and every conscientious patriot was bound to support, a bill which would have passed into law if the speeches made on the hustings had even faintly foreshadowed the subsequent votes of the majority in the House of Commons; but it was not a measure of reform so thorough and satisfactory as its earnest advocates held it to be, or such a bold, comprehensive, and splendid scheme as the necessities of the case required, and as the country had a right to demand. We therefore regretted the less when it received its death-blow at the hands of false friends and open enemies, because we felt certain that its slayers would live to lament the work of their hands. At the present moment there are, perhaps, no sincerer mourners for the defunct measure than those who hailed its death with shouts of exultation, and rejoicing in their might, chased from office the men who had resolved that, if the bill could not be saved by their