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ART.

SAMUEL PALMER'S PAINTINGS.*

WHEN a great man dies, be he writer or painter, statesman or scientific writer, we are apt rather to over, than under-rate his achievements, seeking, perhaps, to atone for long-continued neglect by a too tardy justice. But the man who dies after a long life of work in which he has just failed to be great, whose success has always been of that kind which gains ready appreciation within the little circle of friends to whom it is known, but which never touches the world at large—whose genius, in fact, has shown itself in pleasing greatly a few, rather than touching the hearts or affecting the lives of the many—this man is apt, I think, to obtain but scanty justice, directly his powers of pleasing have ceased. And this is, of course, more certainly the case, if he be one whose talents have been somewhat archaic, and if he has never cared to adapt them to the public measure of the useful, the beautiful, or the true. So it is that I venture to dwell a little upon the style of painting, and the habit of mind which that style showed, of the late Mr. Samuel Palmer, one of the oldest members of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours. And first, a very few words about the man himself. He was born in the beginning of the present century, was brought up as a painter from the early age of fourteen, was instructed by Linnell and befriended by Blake, worked mainly in oil up to 1840, soon after which time he joined the Society of Painters in Water-Colours, of which body he continued a member till the date of his death. Without entering into personal details, we may say, without offence, that, as evidenced in his work, there were two ruling motives in the artist's mind; or, perhaps, I should rather say, two media through which he saw Nature and Art. These were his religious and poetical feelings, and, though I put them here as separate influences, they were practically inseparable. "Milton and the Bible," says the deceased artist's son, in the brief memoir of his father's life which he has already published, were the two ruling influences of his life, and much of the massive dignity of the one and the simple solemnity of the other, passed habitually into his work. Does it not seem somewhat of a contradiction to say that any paintings can echo, in form and colour, at one and the same time, the splendid and somewhat involved picturesqueness of Milton, and the straightforward simplicity of the English of the Bible? And yet it is certainly true of Mr. Palmer's best work, that both these elements live therein side by side, along with a style which is at once peculiar, gorgeous, and intricate, which rejoices in the most varied harmonies of colour, and which treats the various forms with which it is concerned from an idealistic point of view. We find in Palmer's work a curious naïveté, which, like that of the Bible itself, seems sometimes almost to verge upon childlikeness. A painter whose habit of mind is evidently one of the most intense earnestness and humility, he, nevertheless, treats and selects his subjects with a daring indifference to the possibility of their adequate representation, which is of rare occurrence even with Turner himself. I do not think it of much avail to discuss here from whom he gathered the elements of his style, nor to speculate upon his relation to such painters as Barrett and Varley, or to the later manner of Turner. No doubt, he owed much to Claude, and much also to his master Linnell, and it was probably the influence of the latter that gave to his work that element of simplicity and delight in natural things which is evident throughout his paintings. For though he walked with Nature much after the fashion of Blake—seeing the visible universe only as a veil to the spiritual—he never, like Blake, lost sight of that veil's beauty, nor ever ceased to try and make it manifest. No doubt, he, too, had visions of angels at every sunrise, and dreamt of Greece and Syria whenever the sun set upon English meadows. But in whatever celestial light he saw the grove and stream appareled, he still remembered that it was earth, not Heaven, that he was painting, and men, not spirits, that he was painting for. I do not suppose that I can, at this late day, make a single one of the "all-ill-judging world approve" of these beautiful works, which they have in the main ignored for the sixty years during which they have been continually before their eyes, nor extort from a public that worships Frith and Horsley, a passing glance of admiration for the work of a painter who spent the whole of a long life in devotion to the finest form of landscape art. But, per-

haps, in these great days of Art education, when Cardinals, Prime Ministers, and philosophers say such fine things about the moral influence of painting, I may persuade a few thoughtful persons to go for themselves to the little gallery in Bond Street, and pay that tribute to Palmer's work that he would have liked best,—a careful examination. Having tried, and tried vainly, to get more public recognition bestowed upon this artist's work while he was alive, I feel keenly the futility of trying to alter a verdict that can no longer affect its object; and my only hope in writing this brief notice is to assert again that admiration which I have so frequently been ridiculed for bestowing, and to pay what tribute I may to the memory of a painter who never altered his course to win public recognition, or surrendered his theories in deference to public prejudice. Of the special works of Mr. Palmer, which have been so industriously collected by the Fine-Art Society, I need say little more here than that they form a very typical collection, and include much of his finest work. The magnificent Milton series painted for Mr. Valpy, and still in that gentleman's possession, are all here, and are, perhaps, on the whole, the finest specimens in the exhibition. Anything more magnificent in colour or more daring in conception than the one which is entitled "The Eastern Gate," I have never beheld, except in the very finest work of Turner; and even in Turner himself there was a lack of that untroubled belief, that appearance of delight and gladness, which make this drawing so very beautiful. Of the others, the best is probably Mr. Gurney's "Tityrus Restored to his Patrimony;" and the drawing of Rome, entitled "A Golden City," is also extremely fine. Of the many poetical qualities of these works, I hope to speak in another notice, yet life is short, and I must content myself here with a hope, not a certainty; but our readers have now an opportunity of judging for themselves that should not be neglected.

HARRY QUILTER.

BOOKS.

MORE BIOGRAPHIES OF CARLYLE.*

How great is the revealing power of Death! A year ago, had the question been asked what rank in the hierarchy of fame should be assigned to the thinker who was then a feeble old man at Chelsea, rapidly growing more feeble, the answers would have been various; but the expectations of the most enthusiastic admirer would surely have fallen short of the truth, as far as we now know the truth. The unique character of the tribute which Carlyle has received from his contemporaries may be brought home to the reader's mind, by comparing it with that paid to one who, while both lived, seemed to possess much the same hold on public attention. The contrast which the great reveler sets before us is a striking one. The *Autobiography of John Mill* was devoured with keen interest, discussed with strong and various sympathies, laid on the shelf where it might be consulted most readily, and there was an end of the matter. No pilgrimages were made to remote country places to obtain details of his youth and childhood, no old newspapers and magazines were disinterred for some chance word from or about him; we had nothing but what he or his representatives had chosen to give us, and we did not want any more. Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, on the other hand, seemed merely to whet the public appetite for narratives of his life; those now to be added to the subjects of a former review are the third, fourth, and fifth given to the world in the few months since it was possible to publish his biography without consulting him, and these (the works respectively of an Englishman, American, and German) do not, we believe, exhaust the list of books of which he has, in that short interval, formed the subject. We review the list with very mixed feelings. Even so far as it consists of mere compilations, it marks a strong response to a message of warning and rebuke, addressed to his generation by one who may be considered, in some sort, a prophet, and so far it is valuable. The best specimen of this kind of tribute is that by Mr. Howie Wylie, previously reviewed in these columns (*Spectator*, April 16th), a work which we know to have been read with pleasure by at least one warm and intimate friend of Carlyle, and to which, after perusing others of its kin, we return with a somewhat heightened

* *Thomas Carlyle*. By M. D. Conway. London: Chatto and Windus.
Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Carlyle. By R. H. Shepherd. London: W. H. Allen and Co.
Thomas Carlyle. Ein Lebensbild und Goldkörner aus seinen Werken. Dargestellt durch Eugen Oswald. Leipzig: Wm. Friedrich. London: Trübner.

* The Fine-Art Society.

estimate, from the point of view of the critic. Mr. Shepherd's biography, on the other hand, reminds us, we are compelled to allow, of all that has to be said against this class of books. To expand an obituary notice, for which the writer has had no advantages which his readers did not share, into a bulky work, in which all that is of interest has been printed at least once before, is not to do honour to the memory of a man of genius. It is rather to do all in one's power to blunt the impression of a strong individuality and a massive and original mind. We wish that the book—which is, after all, the monument of much industry and a warm admiration for a great man—could be dismissed with even this as its worst censure; but it is defaced in one place by a very ungraceful and disagreeable attack on the author's fellow-workers, the bad taste of which is so glaring that one can hardly bring oneself to consider how far it is unjust. We have found their productions more readable; at any rate, than that of their self-appointed judge. However, Mr. Shepherd has given the public a good deal of accurate information about Carlyle, or rather, about his books, and has included some of Carlyle's own writing not otherwise conveniently accessible, which, of course, is valuable. And this is the outside of what we can say for these volumes.

In turning from Mr. Shepherd's six or seven hundred pages to Mr. Conway's two hundred, we invert the ratio of bulk and merit. We have here no mere compilation, but the recollections of one who loved Carlyle, and has power to unveil some part of the lovable nature that was in the man. The glimpses of the home at Chelsea given here are more vivid and life-like than almost anything else that has been published in that kind, though everything of the kind is a little disappointing. Mrs. Carlyle's description of the grim cook who had made a favourable impression on her husband, and whose main recommendation was that "when people dies I can lay 'em out perfect," will recall to the memory of her friends many a fragment of her lively and dramatic reminiscences; and the little duet on the Brownings which followed, though not of a kind in which husband and wife had better often indulge, is full of a sweet music, half-tender, half-mocking,—the first element, perhaps, being due rather to the subject than the performers. There is but little of this, but the whole thing is so slight—a magazine article enlarged—that a single reminiscence is enough to flavour the volume. There is more than one touch that opens a vista of deep interest. "John Mill seemed always to become suddenly aged when Carlyle was mentioned," is a tragedy put into a sentence. On the other hand, we cannot pass over without protest a strangely misleading and somewhat arrogant allusion to a man of pure and heroic character, to whom Carlyle was under the greatest possible obligations, Edward Irving (p. 46). However, this is the only passage we have to condemn. The little sketch leaves an impression of pathos not fully accounted for by anything the biographer has to tell us. But the inward experience of a large character is coloured more by thought and belief than by circumstance; and Carlyle's views had not, we think, much element of hopefulness. In speaking of Carlyle's disappointment in the class from whom he hoped so much (p. 59)—a passage which, we may remark, in passing, is made obscure by its ambiguous use of the verb "*disappoint*"—Mr. Conway touches on the spring of much of Carlyle's sadness. His nature seems to us one of those, more common, perhaps, in others than in men of genius, which are especially liable to disappointment. The recollection that Carlyle was a sufferer, however we account for the fact, is, at any rate, an important condition for justice to one towards whom, as perhaps towards most of us, justice implies pity. Some letters, of considerable but unequal interest, now first published, conclude the little volume, and strongly bear out this impression. Written during Carlyle's early youth, though they give evidence of the faults with which his latest writing has made us too familiar, they bear also touching witness to the despondency which in part arose from a consciousness of their presence, and in part excuses them. We had marked several passages for quotation; but we must be content with two pieces of self-portraiture, in the sad depreciation of which we find a key to much of the mournfulness of his life. "When I review my past conduct," he wrote, in 1819, at the age of only twenty-four (the second sentence comes a few months later), "it seems to have been guided by narrow and defective views, and worst of all, by lurking, deeply lurking affectation. I could have defended these views by the most paramount logic, but what logic can withstand experience?" "Timid, yet not humble; weak, yet

enthusiastic; nature and education have rendered me entirely unfit to force my way among the thick-skinned inhabitants of this planet." Surely the outcry of the youth throws some light on the experience of the man, however little it seems to prefigure it.

While Mr. Conway's work is interesting as supplying us with an American view of Carlyle, the third work on our list—smaller in bulk even than that with which we have coupled it—derives a like interest from the fact of its being the notice of a German admirer. Mr. Oswald is qualified by an equal knowledge of England and Germany to do justice to one who might have been known as an interpreter between the two nations, if this claim on our gratitude had not been swallowed up in others still greater. Perhaps, without national arrogance, we may also ascribe to Mr. Oswald's long residence among Englishmen, his candid and generous expression of regret at some of his hero's anti-Gallican utterances during the war between France and his own country. He takes a very just view of Carlyle's relation to German literature, and we are glad to find among the names here cited of previous workers in this mine, that of one whom Carlyle himself failed adequately to recognise. The article on William Taylor, of Norwich, is one of the few which seem to us to prefigure what is disagreeable in the *Reminiscences*. As we have mentioned the baleful word, let us discharge ourselves of our only complaint against this appreciative notice, by expressing our regret that an admirer of Carlyle's should fall into the blunder of ascribing to "Philistines and Pharisees" the lament over the posthumous work which robbed so many admirers of the belief that Carlyle was grateful, reverent, and compassionate. Let his disciple pass in silence his posthumous work; the hero can afford it, and it is the admirer's best policy. That Mr. Oswald has not done so is almost the only flaw we can discover in this readable little book, which, if it has not the interest of Mr. Conway's, in being the work of a personal friend, seems to us a much truer critical estimate. The passage which has most interested us is the comparison with Mazzini (p. 48), but many people will turn most readily to the picture here given of Goethe's feelings towards Carlyle, nowhere else conveniently accessible, and new to most English readers. The estimate of Carlyle's life of Schiller will strike most as exaggerated, but it seems to have been shared by the great German. It is strange that we should find ground for the same protest in the tribute of an American and German admirer of Carlyle, but both are alike unappreciative of the noblest of his friends; and it is hardly more misleading to say, as Mr. Conway does, that Irving was insane (though this is an utter untruth), than to describe him, as Mr. Oswald does, merely as the founder of the sect called after his name (though of course this is literally true). On the whole, however, no book written about Carlyle since his death seems to us so free from faults as this unpretending little brochure, which we would heartily commend to our readers. The nationality of the writer gives it a very distinct colouring, and the narrative of which most readers are probably a little tired is given with the lightest touch possible. It is written in easy and pleasant German, and enriched with a little anthology from Carlyle's writings, in which some of the thoughts seem more at home as they appear in their translated form than they do in their native English.

To quit all criticism of the particular accounts of the life of Carlyle, however, let us turn to what is, after all, the most important fact about them,—that they are the seventh and eighth books published about a person who has not been dead a year. Surely the phenomenon is unique! Yet this interest cannot be adequately explained by referring to any obvious cause, either in the outward history, the intellectual legacy, or the moral character of the man to whom it refers. This succession of biographies has recorded no striking adventure, no picturesque transition; has displayed no brilliant picture of society, no graphic representation of life at either extreme of the social scale. Nor have these books justified their existence by transcribing any message of which their hero was the originator, and which could be presented as original to the world of thinkers; at least, not without giving a new scope to the definition of original thought. Finally, it cannot be said that Carlyle owes this position to any peculiar moral elevation attained by him. What is wrong is not purged of its evil by association with genius, or even with a high moral ideal, although genius has many drawbacks for which we must make great allowance no doubt. We would not conceal our regret that in the case of Carlyle the need for judgment has been so hurried,

that harsh words have been necessarily spoken by an open grave; but this very hurry is a part of that testimony to the impressiveness of the man which we are now trying to account for, and we only return to what has been amply said, so far as to declare that this unique influence must be sought elsewhere than in a heroic character. His most important writings bear witness to his failings, some passages in his longest work are painful to remember, and we must reckon it among the few instances of what must be called flattery from Mr. Conway's pen, that he tells us (p. 107) "that no man more hated tyranny than Carlyle," while Mr. Oswald's assertion, "He forgot that Marcus Aurelius was succeeded by Commodus," seems to us at once to recall and refute, in a simple, undeniable statement, all that that strange tribute ignores. What is it which has given to a teacher who has offended some of the strongest convictions we held, and who, in a sense, has taught us nothing new, an influence not attained, as far as we know, by the noblest of his predecessors?

Perhaps its great extent may partly be explained by the fact, noticed by Mr. Oswald, that from his writings, as from the Bible, may be extracted the text of many a very different sermon. The negative advantages of a great teacher must always seem to his admirers both unimportant and disputable, but they are not to be wholly ignored. There are circumstances under which a vacuum gives power, and Carlyle was enabled to bring home his message to a much larger audience than it would otherwise have reached, because he neither claimed nor rejected the name of Christian. A thinker who so revered the past as to see in it the revelation of the Son of Man, would not have been accepted by our time as a leader of thought. On the other hand, a moral teacher who wholly rejected this revelation, would have alienated even more of those who are now Carlyle's disciples. Even now to some extent, and thirty or forty years ago it was far truer, the motive power of literature lies among those who can neither accept nor break with Christianity; and wherever a thinker expresses himself distinctly on this issue, he must forego the attention of a large proportion of those who seek for truth. In the most characteristic utterance of Thomas Carlyle, there is no stumbling-block of this kind. Those who longed to believe in Christ—those who found in that life the perfect ideal of life, and wanted only evidence for its reality—could listen to Carlyle, at least in his important writings, unrepelled by any such divergence as they would find in all others who dominated the intellectual world. And then, again, those who had wholly cast off that allegiance found nothing in his writings to condemn their attitude. There is an interesting passage in a letter, given in Mr. Conway's volume, from Emerson to Mr. Alexander Ireland, written in 1833, which seems to us to throw a strong light on this side of his mind. "I asked him," said Emerson, "at what religious development" various passages in his published writings "pointed." "He replied that he was not competent to state it to himself,—he wanted rather to see. My own feeling was that I had met with men of far less power who had far greater insight into religious truth." Such men would by that mere fact, it seems to us, have been less qualified to fill the place that Carlyle has filled. It was his vagueness here to which he owed a large part of his audience.

Of course, it was not to that vagueness that he owed any part of his message. The message itself (partly considered by us on a former occasion, where, however, we regarded him rather as the representative of literature than of thought) is most appropriately commemorated in a picture by Maddox Brown, where Carlyle appears as the Prophet of Work. The familiar gospel may appear an inadequate source of such influence as we have to account for. Its strength lay in the fact that he gave a message specially needed by our generation, with a set of associations which in the case of every other messenger have been conspicuously wanting. He called men to work with the passion and the fervour which previously they had known only in the summons to fight. But that we may not seem to minimize a striking and impressive fact by bringing forward an inadequate explanation of it, let us be permitted a hasty glimpse at the attitude of literature towards toil.

It is a strange fact in human history, but it is a fact, that the poetry of the world has cast its rays only on the energies that devastate and embitter life, and left those that make it happy—nay, those that make it possible—ungilded by any glow of admiration. It is not, however, inexplicable. Many of the great masterpieces of literature belong to a society that was tainted by slavery. The thought of Europe has been moulded on the utter-

ances of men who believed that the implement of freemen was the sword. To the greatest thinker that ever lived—surely the creator of the Platonic Dialogues may be thus entitled—the life of manual toil meant the life of exclusion from all the nobler interests of humanity. Even the exceptions which will rise to the reader's mind, even the lovely music to which Virgil has set the life of the farm and the herdsman, seems to us to corroborate, in the main, the assertion that antiquity despised this life. The "Georgics" have no root in the soil, they express no great feature of national life. They are a work of erudition, not an outcome of any robust, home-bred experience. Perhaps they are not, in this respect, a true expression of the life of Rome. But the literary work of Rome, being, as it is, an echo of Greece, only dilutes and gives bulk to the lesson which has cast scorn on industry. The wonderful people who have left their external memorial in road and aqueduct, when they came to letters, caught the tone of their conquered teachers, and have written nothing, whatever they have effected in brick and stone, to sever the classical association of work and bondage. And thus it has come to pass that the whole influence of that literature which has constituted a liberal education, went to strengthen the natural tendency of pride and indolence to look down on all bodily exertion, unless associated with the lurid glory of conquest.

That this should be the influence of a world tainted by slavery is explicable, but how comes it that we must say something not very different of the disciples of Christ? In spite of the fact that it owns allegiance to one whom a biographer names as "the Carpenter," chivalry is as hostile to industrial life as classical feeling. Froissart is at least as unsympathetic with the life of the peasant as Homer. This chivalric scorn for honest toil is not quite so explicable as the classical, but it is not altogether unintelligible. Everywhere mankind mistake silence for denial, and are apt to suppose a claim ignored, if it be not emphasised. Christianity brought a new ideal of duty into the world, of which the key-note was resignation. Is it, therefore, hostile to honest industry? History and reason alike reply in an emphatic negative. If any one could come to a study of the words of Christ with a mind free from all prepossessions, he would be astonished to discover that they had ever been supposed hostile to the labours of secular life. But a general and deep misconception must have some large cause. Seen from below, it cannot be denied that the lesson of resignation may become the sanction of indolence, and, perhaps, while resignation was a new idea, the distortion was inevitable. And thus it has happened that the two strongest influences that have ruled our modern life—that of the Classical world and of Christianity—have both in practice and in actual experience been opposed to the due honour of Work. It has formed no part of the heroic or the saintly ideal, as these have been hitherto narrowed and mutilated.

The life thus slighted has in our day become the focus of universal attention. The science of political economy, now no longer in its infancy, bears witness to its widened claims, and the working classes are almost as much the object of attention to the poet and the dramatist as they are to the social philosopher and the statesman. But in a general way, all representatives of this changed feeling belong to that school, however we name it, which is opposed to the supreme position of the spiritual life in man. Whatever their private creed (and many a Christian, no doubt, must be reckoned among them), their influence, on the whole, told against the belief in the supernatural. The whole movement of which the importance given to productive labour is one expression, is in alliance with the current of scientific thought,—it belongs to the world of the visible and the outward; it is, in a word, materialistic. And thus the new life has not appealed to the heart of struggling men as the old life did, and we have to accept the fact that Christianity has entered into a far closer alliance with that type of civilisation which spent itself in desolating the peaceful home, in torturing the sensitive frame, in spreading terror and slaughter, than it has with the healing influence that seeks to organise productive toil, to make and to shelter the thrifty, industrious home. It is vain to deny the paradox, and we are not at this moment concerned to explain it. It is sufficient that it exists.

But in the fullness of time, a teacher arose who claimed the lesson of the new world as the heritage of the old. He alone has associated the life of work with all that in former days men have associated exclusively with the life of arms. Carlyle hated politi-

cal economy, and had but scant reverence for all that it implied. His words were steeped in the richest dyes of poetry; on every page is the vividness, the colouring of romance. But on almost every page also is the appeal which, till he wrote, men only knew in the dialect of prose. He spoke the word for our age, but he spoke it in a language for which, except from him, we must turn to the past. He brought the wealth of feudal and chivalric life to enrich the sermon of the nineteenth century. He set before the toiler of to-day, amid the dust and fogs of a prosaic age, the glowing ideal that seemed lost with those vanished ages. He set to music a lesson which, except from him, was associated only with the multiplication-table. Surely we need no other explanation of the vast hold on his generation which has been revealed by his death.

It may be objected that Carlyle's longest work is the life of a conqueror, and that no industrial hero is celebrated by him. But even in the Life of Frederick the Great, the true salt is the writer's sympathy with the life which was not military. His reverence for thrift, for that careful, persevering attention to the homely needs of every-day work which prepared the resources of conquest, is that which is truly characteristic, that which throws into the shade the repulsive tokens of sympathy with the most brutal form of tyranny. And then, in the midst of so much that we must regret in his posthumous utterance, it is pathetic to find this yearning for work forming so large a part of the regret of his own life that it was not swallowed up in the memories of a long career of successful effort, but remained as that sorrow which one cannot but pity in oneself, as we should pity it in another. The feeling evidently blended with his filial love; his reverence for his peasant father strengthened, and was strengthened by, his sense of the sacredness of work. He used to refer to his father's buildings with a simple pride which was as far from ostentation as from patronage; and this latent sympathy with the life of the peasant, enriched as it is by the current of all home-born tenderness, seems to blend subtly with all other sympathy, a note of pathos, in the midst of much that is hard and cruel. His pen was occupied mainly with the great fighters of the world. As this world has hitherto been constituted, it is almost impossible that a great writer, one at least who turns to history, should not be thus occupied. But through the stir and turmoil of battle, a yearning music steals ever and anon upon the ear. Along with the sorrowful confession that "everywhere foolish History prates not of what is done, but of what is not done," we find continual, longing glimpses into the peaceful shelter where work is possible, and all that the reader treasures as a spring of effort within, belongs to this latent memory of dutiful exertion. "Do the duty that lies nearest to thee," was his message to his time, and though the words may mean anything, no one can so speak them as to bring them home to the conscience of common-place humanity, without at once feeling and inspiring a reverence for all homely effort,—for all that makes life sweet and pure and simple.

That one who did this should attain a mighty hold on his generation is not wonderful. Those who profoundly move the men of their own time are not, perhaps, the original thinkers of the world, so much as the teachers who bring original thought home to the multitude. We have in a previous article indicated the quarry whence the material for the fine Gothic edifice built by Carlyle was derived, and must repeat, though we cannot substantiate our opinion, that every serious attempt to estimate him should start from the lesson of Kant. The moral teaching of the Scotchman is little more than a clear and vigorous echo of the great thought of the German,—that only the practical reason moves in a world of certainties, that pure thought is pure scepticism, that we know only inasmuch as we act on our knowledge. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine," is a theme that has formed the text, perhaps, of most of the great preachers who have moved the world. But it is one so infinite in the variety and richness of its application, that every one who gives it forth with any tone of individual feeling and experience will be a benefactor to his kind; and if the resonance of genius be in the voice, it needs no more to take by storm the ear of the world.

THE OLD FACTORY.*

This is not a good novel, but it is a better book, more interesting, lively, and original than a great many novels which are

* *The Old Factory.* By W. Westall. London: Tinsley Brothers.

very successful. Mr. Westall has not much notion of a plot, and in this story the plot he has selected is very old. The world is getting tired of heroes who make low matches, dissolve them by help of legal quibbles, in rather unscrupulous fashion—though, no doubt, in this instance, the wife deserved her fate—and live happily with the second choice ever after. There is nothing in Frank Blackthorne, that we should care about his fate, which is never very uncertain; and we fancy Sir James Hannen would find a good deal of fault with the legal argument through which he is rescued from his miseries. We suspect the Christian name by which a man is always called would be held in the Divorce Court to be his name, even if bride and bridegroom were both aware that he had another, more especially if both intended the marriage to be quite legal. Nor can we say that we care much about Valérie, the faithful and charming heroine, who worships Frank, though the reader thinks at first she is going to be original. A young lady who with one-half of her mind is an English girl and with the other half a French *ingénue*, and alternates between the two characters in voluntary obedience to momentary circumstance, might have been made exceedingly attractive. There is a suggestion of great possibilities in this sketch:—

"In truth, Valérie had two manners and almost two natures. Her mother, a French lady with strictly French notions as to the training of children, had endeavoured to bring her daughter up as a *jeune fille*. But her father, who desired to rear her as maidens are reared in England or Switzerland, had done his best to counteract that design, and there had been many a friendly contention between the husband and wife on the subject. In the end, a compromise was made. Valérie was brought up under two systems, both of which had been followed, even in her education. She had been taught by French and English governesses alternately; and after she had spent two years at a French school, her father, by way, as he said, of balancing the account, had insisted on her passing two years in an English school. The result was that she could be an English girl or a *jeune fille* at pleasure. In the one character, she was frank, open, and outspoken; in the other, reserved, silent, and retiring, answering only in monosyllables, and never by any chance raising her eyes to look a man in the face."

The idea, however, is never worked out, and Valérie declines into an ordinary girl, devoted to the memory of her lover, who is supposed to have perished in a fire, and certain—with a defiance of probability at once charming and pathetic—that all the world is wrong in believing him dead. She would know, she says, and evidence is nothing. That has happened before, and is not interesting enough to blind habitual novel-readers to the improbabilities of the tale, and the woodenness of its principal figures, or rather of the figures which should be the principal ones.

Nevertheless, there are both intelligence and interest in *The Old Factory*. Mr. Westall understands and makes his readers understand a passed-away life, that of the old, rough, Lancashire manufacturers, the frugal, industrious, masterful, and slightly unscrupulous men, who, when machine-weaving began, rose from nothing to wealth, and then precipitated themselves, as a rule, hungrily upon the land. Mr. Westall can describe them most vividly, till Adam Blackthorne, Frank's father, and the true hero of *The Old Factory*, the farming-man forced into manufactures, who was upright, steady, and in a way kind, but could not keep from chucking any refractory "hand" into the nearest ditch, though he had vowed never to strike one, is as real as any hero of Mr. Smiles's endless biographies; and he can do something more. He can paint atmosphere. There are entire pages in the first half of this novel which, read by themselves, are dull, and even tedious, but read in their place, make up a whole which has helped completely to satisfy the reader's mind. He knows when he has finished them what that life looked like, and felt like, and was; who were the figures in it, what they wanted, what they feared, how they achieved their ends, and to what extent their fears were well founded. The sordidness of this life, its horrid bleakness, so to speak, yet its fullness, its strong purpose, its dramatic excitement, come vividly before the eye, as do the men and women who throng about it, who would fight for the "mayster," or trample on his stomach in wooden clogs, according to the circumstances of their relation to him. Adam Blackthorne's flight over the moor from a gang of angry hands, his tragic-comic defence of his mills with real soldiers, real water, and bogus artillery, and above all, his courtship of his wife, are most vividly painted, and in a very unusual way. You know all about the latter, and see what moved Adam and what Rachel, and what their relation to each other was, and how they made love; see it, and know it for certain, and yet you are told scarcely